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THE HAPPY BOY.

BY

BJORNSTJERNE BJORNSON

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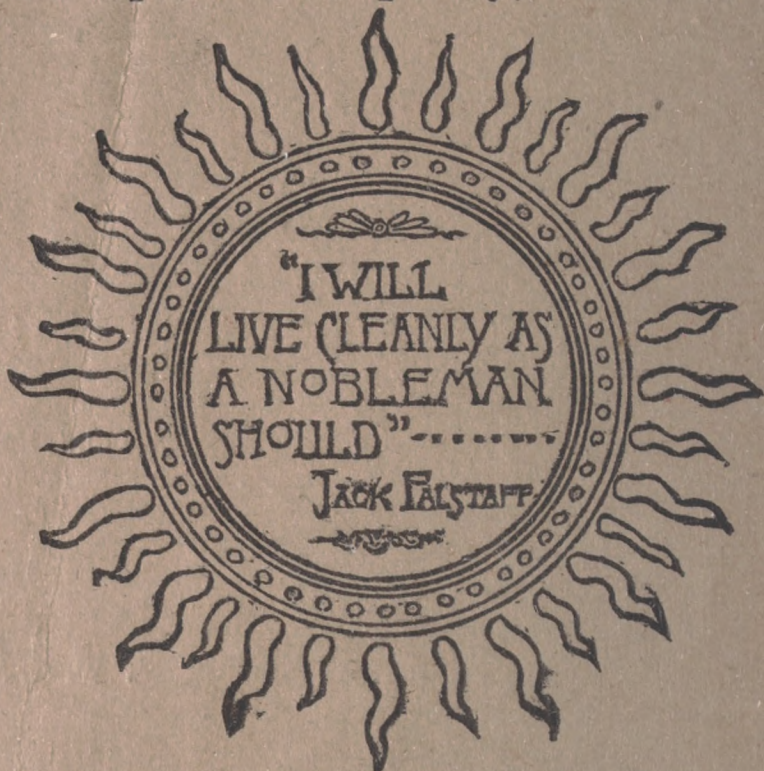


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THE HAPPY BOY

A Tale of Norwegian Peasant Life

BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY

H. R. G.



NEW YORK:

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THE HAPPY BOY.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE tale here presented is the story of a young peasant boy, to whom the world has always seemed a delightful dream, until he is awakened to his position in it by finding obstacles in the way of his love for a girl who is above him in birth. The characters of the hero and heroine are both drawn more distinctly than in "Arne," the previous work of Björnson, with which the American public are familiar; though the two books are marked by the same delicate touch, the same subtle insight, and the same simplicity of language. The episode of the schoolmaster's story, too, is told with a tender pathos, which shows the author's profound knowledge of the intricate motives and workings of human nature. Everywhere we find sweet pictures, delicious representations, of real country life in Norway.

It is hoped that this little sketch, slight as it may be, will serve further to acquaint us with the idyllic thinker already introduced by the translations of "Arne" and "The Fisher Maiden."

THE HAPPY BOY.



CHAPTER I.

O EYVIND was his name ; and he cried when he was born. But as soon as he sat up on his mother's lap, he laughed ; and when they lighted the candles in the evening, he laughed louder than ever, but then began to cry, because they would not let him reach them. "That boy will be something wonderful," said his mother.

A low, barren cliff overhung the house in which he was born ; fir and birch looked down on the roof, and wild cherry strewed flowers over it. Upon this roof there walked about a little goat, which belonged to Oeyvind. He was kept there that he might not go astray ; and Oeyvind carried leaves and grass up to him. One fine day the goat leaped down, and, — away to the cliff ; he went straight up, and came where he never had been before. Oeyvind did not see him when he came out after dinner, and thought immediately of the fox. He grew hot all over, looked around about, and called, "Killy-killy-killy-goat !"

"Bay-ay-ay," said the goat, from the brow of the hill, as he cocked his head on one side and looked down.

But at the side of the goat there kneeled a little girl.

"Is it yours, this goat?" she asked.

Oeyvind stood with eyes and mouth wide open, thrust both hands into the breeches he had on, and asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Marit, mother's little one, father's fiddle, the elf in the house, grand-daughter of Ole Nordistuen of the Heide farms, four years old in the autumn, two days after the frost nights, I!"

"Are you really?" he said, and drew a long breath, which he had not dared to do so long as she was speaking.

"Is it yours, this goat?" asked the girl again.

"Ye-es," he said, and looked up.

"I have taken such a fancy to the goat. You will not give it to me?"

"No, that I won't."

She lay kicking her legs, and looking down at him, and then she said: "But if I give you a butter-cake for the goat, can I have him then?"

Oeyvind came of poor people, and had eaten butter-cake only once in his life, that was when grandpapa came there, and any thing like it he had never eaten before nor since. He looked up at the girl: "Let me see the butter-cake first," said he.

She was not long about it, took out a large cake, which she held in her hand: "Here it is," she said, and threw it down.

"Ow, it went to pieces," said the boy: he gathered up every bit with the utmost care; he could not help tasting the very smallest, and that was so good, he had to taste another, and before he knew it himself, he had eaten up the whole cake.

"Now the goat is mine," said the girl. The boy stopped with the last bit in his mouth, the girl lay and

laughed, and the goat stood by her side, with white breast and dark brown hair, looking sideways down.

“Could you not wait a little while?” begged the boy his heart began to beat. Then the girl laughed still more, and got up quickly on her knees.

“No, the goat is mine,” she said, and threw her arms round its neck, loosened one of her garters, and fastened it round. Oeyvind looked up. She got up, and began pulling at the goat: it would not follow, and twisted its neck downwards to where Oeyvind stood. “Bay-ay-ay,” it said. But she took hold of its hair with one hand, pulled the string with the other, and said gently, “Come, goat, and you shall go into the room and eat out of mother’s dish and my apron.” And then she sung,—

“Come, boy’s goat,
Come, mother’s calf,
Come, mewing cat
In snow-white shoes.
Come, yellow ducks,
Come out of your hiding-place;
Come, little chickens,
Who can hardly go;
Come, my doves
With soft feathers;
See, the grass is wet,
But the sun does you good;
And early, early is it in summer,
But call for the autumn, and it will come.”

There stood the boy.

He had taken care of the goat since the winter before, when it was born, and he had never imagined he could lose it; but now it was done in a moment, and he should never see it again.

His mother came up humming from the hearth, with wooden pans which she had scoured: she saw the boy

sitting with his legs crossed under him on the grass, crying, and she went up to him.

"What are you crying about?"

"Oh, the goat, the goat!"

"Yes: where is the goat?" asked his mother, looking up at the roof.

"It will never come back again," said the boy.

"Dear me! how could that happen?"

He would not confess immediately.

"Has the fox taken it?"

"Ah, if it only were the fox!"

"Are you crazy?" said his mother: "what has become of the goat?"

"Oh-h-h — I happened to — to — to sell it for a cake!"

As soon as he had uttered the word, he understood what it was to sell the goat for a cake: he had not thought of it before. His mother said, —

"What do you suppose the little goat thinks of you, when you could sell him for a cake?"

And the boy thought about it, and felt sure that he could never again be happy in this world, and not even in heaven, he thought afterwards. He felt so sorry, that he promised himself never again to do any thing wrong, never to cut the thread on the spinning-wheel, nor let the goats out, nor go down to the sea alone. He fell asleep where he lay, and dreamed about the goat, that it had gone to Heaven: our Lord sat there with a great beard as in the catechism, and the goat stood eating the leaves off a shining tree; but Oeyvind sat alone on the roof, and could not come up.

Suddenly there came something wet close up to his ear, and he started up. "Bay-ay-ay!" it said; and it was the goat, who had come back again.

"What! have you got back?" He jumped up, took

it by the two fore-legs, and danced with it as if it were a brother: he pulled its beard, and he was just going in to his mother with it, when he heard some one behind him, and, looking, saw the girl sitting on the greensward by his side. Now he understood it all, and let go the goat.

“Is it you, who have come with it?” She sat, tearing the grass up with her hands, and said, —

“They would not let me keep it: grandfather is sitting up there, waiting.”

While the boy stood looking at her, he heard a sharp voice from the road above call out, “Now!”

Then she remembered what she was to do: she rose, went over to Oeyvind, put one of her muddy hands into his, and, turning her face away, said, —

“I beg your pardon!”

But then her courage was all gone: she threw herself over the goat, and wept.

“I think you had better keep the goat,” said Oeyvind, looking the other way.

“Come, make haste!” said grandpapa, up on the hill; and Marit rose, and walked with reluctant feet upwards.

“You are forgetting your garter,” Oeyvind called after her. She turned round, and looked first at the garter and then at him. At last she came to a great resolution, and said, in a choked voice, —

“You may keep that.”

He went over to her, and, taking her hand, said, —

“Thank you!”

“Oh, nothing to thank for,” she answered, but drew a long sigh, and walked on.

He sat down on the grass again. The goat walked about near him, but he was no longer so pleased with it as before.

CHAPTER II.

THE goat was fastened to the wall; but Oeyvind walked about, looking up at the cliff. His mother came out, and sat down by his side: he wanted to hear stories about what was far away, for now the goat no longer satisfied him. So she told him how once every thing could talk: the mountain talked to the stream, and the stream to the river, the river to the sea, and the sea to the sky; but then he asked if the sky did not talk to any one; and the sky talked to the clouds, the clouds to the trees, the trees to the grass, the grass to the flies, the flies to the animals, the animals to the children, the children to the grown-up people; and so it went on, until it had gone round, and no one could tell where it had begun. Oeyvind looked at the mountain, the trees, the sky, and had never really seen them before. The cat came out at that moment, and lay down on the stone before the door in the sunshine.

“What does the cat say?” asked Oeyvind, pointing
His mother sang, —

“A. evening softly shines the sun,
The cat lies lazy on the stone.
Two small mice,
Cream thick and nice,

Four bits of fish,
I stole behind a dish,
And am so lazy and tired,
Because so well I have fared,"

says the cat.

But then came the cock, with all the hens. "What does the cock say?" asked Oeyvind, clapping his hands together. His mother sang, —

"The mother-hen her wings doth sink,
The cock stands on one leg to think.
That gray goose
Steers high her course;
But sure am I that never she
As clever as a cock can be.
Run in, you hens, keep under the roof to-day,
For the sun has got leave to stay away,"

says the cock.

But the little birds were sitting on the ridgepole, singing. "What do the birds say?" asked Oeyvind, laughing.

"Dear Lord, how pleasant is life,
For those who have neither toil nor strife,"

say the birds.

And she told him what they all said, down to the ant, who crawled in the moss, and the worm who worked in the bark.

That same summer, his mother began to teach him to read. He had owned books a long time, and often wondered how it would seem when they also began to talk. Now the letters turned into animals, birds, and every thing else; but soon they began to walk together, two and two; *a* stood and rested under a tree, which was called *b*; then came *e*, and did the same; but when three or four came together, it seemed as if they were angry with each other, for it would not go right. And the farther along

ne came, the more he forgot what they were: he remembered longest *a*, which he liked best; it was a little black lamb, and was friends with everybody; but soon he forgot *a* also: the book had no more stories, nothing but lessons.

One day his mother came in, and said to him, —

“To-morrow school begins, and then you are going up to the farm with me.”

Oeyvind had heard that school was a place where many boys played together; and he had no objection. Indeed, he was much pleased: he had often been at the farm, but never when there was school there; and now he was so anxious to get there, he walked faster than his mother up over the hills. As they came up to the neighboring house, a tremendous buzzing, like that from the water-mill at home, met their ears; and he asked his mother what it was.

“That is the children reading,” she answered; and he was much pleased, for that was the way he used to read, before he knew the letters. When he came in, there sat as many children round a table as he had ever seen at church; others were sitting on their luncheon-boxes, which were ranged round the walls; some stood in small groups round a large printed card; the schoolmaster, an old gray-haired man, was sitting on a stool by the chimney-corner, filling his pipe. They all looked up as Oeyvind and his mother entered, and the mill-hum ceased as if the water had suddenly been turned off. All looked at the new-comers; the mother bowed to the schoolmaster, who returned her greeting.

“Here I bring a little boy who wants to learn to read,” said his mother.

“What is the fellow’s name?” said the schoolmaster, diving down into his pouch after tobacco.

“Oeyvind,” said his mother: “he knows his letters, and can put them together.”

“Is it possible!” said the schoolmaster: “come here, you Whitehead!”

Oeyvind went over to him: the schoolmaster took him on his lap, and raised his cap.

“What a nice little boy!” said he, and stroked his hair. Oeyvind looked up into his eyes, and laughed.

“Is it at me you are laughing?” asked he, with a frown.

“Yes, it is,” answered Oeyvind, and roared with laughter. At that the schoolmaster laughed, Oeyvind’s mother laughed: the children understood that they also were allowed to laugh, and so they all laughed together.

So Oeyvind became one of the scholars.

As he was going to find his seat, they all wanted to make room for him: he looked round a long time, while they whispered and pointed; he turned round on all sides, with his cap in his hand and his book under his arm.

“Now, what are you going to do?” asked the schoolmaster, who was busy with his pipe again. Just as the boy is going to turn round to the schoolmaster, he sees close beside him, sitting down by the hearthstone on a little red-painted tub, Marit, of the many names: she had covered her face with both hands, and sat peeping at him through her fingers.

“I shall sit here,” said Oeyvind, quickly, taking a tub and seating himself at her side. Then she raised a little the arm nearest him, and looked at him from under her elbow: immediately he also hid his face with both hands, and looked at her from under his elbow. So they sat, keeping up the sport, until she laughed, then he laughed

too; the children had seen it, and laughed with them; at that, there rung out in a fearfully strong voice, which, however, grew milder at every pause, —

“Silence! you young scoundrels, you rascals, you little good-for-nothings! keep still, and be good to me, you sugar-pigs.”

That was the schoolmaster, whose custom it was to boil up, but calm down again before he had finished. It grew quiet immediately in the school, until the water-wheels again began to go: every one read aloud from his book, the sharpest trebles piped up, the rougher voices drummed louder and louder to get the preponderance; here and there one shouted in above the others, and Oeyvind had never had such fun in all his life.

“Is it always like this here?” whispered he to Marit.

“Yes, just like this,” she said.

Afterwards, they had to go up to the schoolmaster, and read; and then a little boy was called to read, so that they were allowed to go and sit down quietly again.

“I have got a goat now, too,” said she.

“Have you?”

“Yes; but it is not so pretty as yours.”

“Why don’t you come oftener up on the cliff?”

“Grandpapa is afraid I shall fall over.”

“But it is not so very high.”

“Grandpapa won’t let me, for all that.”

“Mother knows so many songs,” said he.

“Grandpapa does, too, you can believe.”

“Yes; but he does not know what mother does.”

“Grandpapa knows one about a dance. Would you like to hear it?”

“Yes, very much.”

“Well, then, you must come farther over here, so that the schoolmaster may not hear.”

He changed his place, and then she recited a little piece of a song three or four times over, so that the boy learned it, and that was the first he learned at school.

"Up with you, youngsters!" called out the schoolmaster: "this is the first day, so you shall be dismissed early; but first we must say a prayer, and sing."

Instantly, all was life in the school: they jumped down from the benches, sprung over the floor, and talked into each other's mouths.

"Silence! you young torments, you little beggars, you noisy boys! be quiet, and walk softly across the floor, little children," said the schoolmaster; and now they walked quietly, and took their places; after which, the schoolmaster went in front of them, and made a short prayer. Then they sung: the schoolmaster began in a deep bass; all the children stood with folded hands, and joined in. Oeyvind stood farthest down by the door with Marit, and looked on: they also folded their hands, but they could not sing.

That was the first day at school





CHAPTER III.

OEYVIND grew, and became a clever boy : at school he was among the first, and at home he did his work well. That was because at home he was fond of his mother, and at school of the schoolmaster. Of his father he saw little ; for he was either away fishing, or else looking after the mill, where half the parish had their grain ground.

What had the most influence on his mind at this time, was the history of the schoolmaster, which his mother told him one evening as they sat by the chimney-corner. This history grew into his books, lay beneath every word the schoolmaster said, and stole round the school-room when it was quiet. It inspired him with obedience and reverence and almost an easier apprehension of every thing that was taught him.

The history was as follows : —

Baard was the schoolmaster's name, and he had had a brother who was called Anders. They were very fond of each other ; both of them enlisted, lived together in garrison, and took part in the war, where they both became corporals in the same company. When they came home again after the war, every one thought they

were two fine fellows. Then their father died: he had much personal property, which it was difficult to divide; but they said, in order that this should not make any disagreement between them, that they would put the goods up at auction, so that each might buy what he liked, and they would divide the profits. As they had said, so it was done. But their father had owned a large gold watch, which was famous far and wide; for that was the only gold watch people thereabouts had seen; and, when it was put up, many rich men wanted to get it, until both the brothers began to bid too; then the others left off. Now Baard expected that Anders would let him get the watch, and Anders expected the same of Baard; they bid each in their turn, to try the other, and looked over at each other while they were bidding. When the watch got up to twenty dollars, Baard thought that his brother was not doing rightly, and bid on, until it was nearly thirty dollars; as Anders still kept on, Baard thought that Anders did not remember how kind he had always been to him, and, besides that, he was the elder; so the watch went up to over thirty dollars. Anders kept on. Then Baard put the watch up to forty dollars at once, and no longer looked at his brother; it grew very still in the auction-room, no sound but the auctioneer quietly naming the price. Anders thought, as he stood there, that if Baard could afford to give forty dollars, he could too; and, if Baard grudged him the watch, he had better take it. He bid over. That, Baard thought, was the greatest disgrace that had ever happened to him: he bid fifty dollars in quite a low tone. Many people stood around, and Anders thought that his brother could not so insult him in the hearing of all: he bid over. Then Baard laughed.

“A hundred dollars, and my brother's love into the

bargain!" said he, and turned and went out of the room. A while after some one came out to him, as he was saddling the horse he had just bought.

"The watch is yours," said the man: "Anders gave up."

At the moment Baard heard that, something like repentance passed through him: he thought of his brother, and not of the watch. The saddle was put on, but he stopped with his hand on the horse's back, uncertain whether he should ride off. Then many people came out, Anders among them; and, as soon as he saw his brother standing over by the saddled horse, he did not imagine what Baard was thinking about at that minute; but he shouted over to him, "Thank you for the watch, Baard! You will not see it go, the day your brother dogs your heels!"

"Nor the day I ride to the farm again," answered Baard, white in the face, and swung himself into the saddle.

The house where they had lived together with their father, neither of them entered again.

A short time after, Anders married into a workman's family, but did not invite Baard to the wedding; nor was Baard in the church. The first year Anders was married, the only cow he owned, was found dead on the north side of the house, where it had been tied to graze; and no one could tell of what she died. Several other misfortunes occurred, and he was fast going down hill; but the worst was, when his barn, with every thing in it, burned down in the middle of the winter; no one knew how the fire had arisen.

"Some one has done that, who wishes me ill," said Anders, and he wept that night. He became a poor man, and lost all desire for work.

The next evening Baard stood in Anders' room. Anders lay in bed, when he entered, but started up.

"What do you want here?" he asked, but then stopped and stood staring at his brother. Baard waited a little while before he answered.

"I want to offer you help, Anders : you are not getting along well."

"I am getting along as you meant to have me, Baard ! Go, or I do not know whether I can govern myself !"

"You are mistaken, Anders : I repent" —

"Go, Baard, or God have mercy on us both !"

Now this is how it had been with Baard. As soon as he heard that his brother was suffering, his heart melted ; but pride kept him back. He felt a need to go to church ; and, when there, he made good resolutions, but he could not carry them out. Often he had come so far, that he could see Anders' house ; but one time, some one came out of the door, another time there was a stranger there, or, again, Anders was standing outside, chopping wood ; so there was always something in the way. But one Sunday, later in winter, he was again in church, and then Anders was there too. Baard saw him : he had grown pale and thin ; he wore the same clothes as of old, when they used to be together, but now they were threadbare and patched. During the sermon he looked up at the clergyman, and Baard thought he looked good and kind, and remembered the years of their childhood, and what a good boy he used to be. Baard himself went to communion that day, and he made his God the solemn promise, that he would be reconciled to his brother, come what would. This resolve went through his soul as he drank the wine ; and, when he rose, he was going straight over to him to sit down beside him ; but some one sat in the way, and his brother did not look up.

After church, there was again something in the way, there were too many people, his wife was walking by his side, and Baard did not know her; he thought it was best to go to his brother's house, and talk seriously with him. When the evening came, he did so. He went straight to the door of the cot, and listened, and he heard his own name spoken: it was by the wife.

"He went to communion to-day," said she: "he certainly thought of you."

"No: he did not think of me," said Anders: "I know him, he only thought of himself."

For a long time nothing was said: Baard was wet with perspiration as he stood there, although it was a cold evening. The wife inside was busy with her kettle, which sung on the hearth: a little baby cried at intervals, and Anders rocked it. Then she said these few words: —

"I believe you are both thinking of each other, without being willing to confess it."

"Let us talk of something else," answered Anders. A little while afterwards he rose, and came towards the door. Baard had to hide himself in the wood-shed; but it was just there that Anders came, to get an armful of wood. Baard stood in the corner, and saw him distinctly: he had taken off his thread-bare Sunday clothes, and had on the uniform he had brought home with him from the war, like Baard's, and which they had promised each other never to touch, but to leave for a family heirloom. Anders' was now patched and worn out; his strong, well-built frame lay as in a bundle of rags; and, at the same time, Baard heard the gold watch ticking in his own pocket. Anders went to where the smaller branches lay; instead of stooping to load himself, he stopped, leaned back against the wood-pile, and looked out at the sky,

which was clear and glittering with stars. Then he drew a sigh, and said, —

“ Yes — yes — yes, — O Lord, O Lord ! ”

So long as Baard lived, he heard that ever afterwards. He was just about to go up to him, when at the same moment his brother coughed, and it seemed so difficult ; more was not needed to hold him back. Anders took his armful of wood, and swept so close by Baard that the branches hit his face, so that it smarted.

For at least ten minutes he stood still on the same spot, and it was doubtful when he would have moved, if, after his emotion, he had not been seized with such a shivering fit that he shook all over. Then he went out : he acknowledged freely to himself that he was too cowardly to go in ; therefore, he now adopted another plan. From a wood-box, which stood in the corner he had just left, he took a pine-knot, went up into the barn, shut the door after him, and struck a light. When he had lighted the pine-knot, he held it up to the nail where Anders hung his lantern, when he came early in the morning to thresh. Baard took out his gold watch and hung it on the nail, put out his light and left ; and then he was so light of heart that he bounded over the snow like a young boy.

The next day he heard that the barn had burned down that same night. Probably sparks had fallen from the pine-knot, which lighted him while hanging up the watch.

This overwhelmed him to such a degree, that he sat that day like a sick man, took out his psalm-book, and sung so that the people in the house thought he had gone crazy. But when evening came, he went out : it was bright moonshine. He walked to his brother's farm, dug about where the fire had been, and found, sure enough, a little melted lump of gold : that was the watch.

It was with that in his hand, he went into his brother that evening, begged for peace, and was going to explain every thing. But it has been before related how his visit terminated.

A little girl had seen him dig about the spot of the fire, some boys going to a dance had seen him, the Sunday evening before, walk down towards the barn, people in the house related how strange he appeared on Monday, and, as every one knew that he and his brother were bitter enemies, information was given and an inquiry was made. No one could prove any thing against him, but suspicion rested on him. Now, less than ever, could he make any approaches to his brother.

Anders had thought of Baard, when the barn burned down, but had mentioned his suspicions to no one. And when he saw Baard enter his room the next evening, pale and distressed, he thought immediately, now he is seized with repentance, but for such an awful deed to his brother he shall never have forgiveness. Afterwards, he heard how people had seen him go down to the barn the same evening it burned; and, although nothing came to light at the examination, he firmly believed that Baard was the guilty one. They met at the examination, — Baard with his good clothes, Anders in his patched ones: Baard looked over to him, and his eyes entreated, so that Anders felt it in the depth of his heart. He does not wish me to say any thing, thought Anders, and when he was asked if he suspected his brother, he answered loudly and distinctly, "No."

Anders took to hard drinking from that day, and soon began to show the effects of it. But it was still worse with Baard, although he did not drink: he was no longer to be known as the same man.

Late one evening, there came a poor woman into the

little room which Baard rented, and asked him to follow her out a minute. He knew her: it was his brother's wife. Baard understood directly what errand brought her, turned pale as a corpse, dressed himself, and followed her without uttering a word. There shone a faint light from Anders' window, it twinkled and disappeared; and they went in the direction of it, for there was no path across the snow. When Baard stood for the second time before his brother's door, he noticed a peculiar odor of sickness which made him feel ill. They went in. A little child was sitting over in the chimney-corner, eating coal, and was quite black in the face, but looked up, and laughed with its white teeth: it was his brother's child.

But over in the bed, with all sorts of clothes thrown over him, lay Anders, emaciated, with smooth high forehead, and looking with hollow eyes at his brother. Baard's knees shook: he sat down at the foot of the bed, and burst into violent sobs. The sick man looked at him steadfastly and was silent. At length he bade his wife go out, but Baard made a sign to her that she should remain; and now these two brothers began to talk together. They explained every thing from the day when they had bid for the watch, up to the one when they now met. Baard concluded by taking out the lump of gold, which he always carried with him; and it was now made clear between the two brothers, that in all these years they had not felt happy a single day.

Anders did not say much, for he was not strong enough; but Baard remained sitting by his bedside as long as Anders was ill.

"Now, I am quite well," said Anders, one morning, when he awoke: "now, brother, we shall live long together, and never leave each other, just as in old times."

But that day he died.

Baard took the wife and child home with him, and they fared well from that time. What the brothers had talked of together, sprung out through walls and darkness, and was known to all the people of the district, and Baard became the most respected man among them. All greeted him as one who had known great sorrow and found happiness again, or as one who had been absent a long time. Baard's firmness of character increased with the friendliness which surrounded him : he became a God-fearing man, and wished to find some occupation, he said ; and so the old corporal became schoolmaster. What he impressed on the children, first and last, was charity ; and he himself practised it, so that the children loved him at once as a playmate and as a father.

Such was the story of the old schoolmaster. It made so deep an impression on Oeyvind's mind, that it became the source both of religion and of wisdom for him. The schoolmaster had got to be an almost supernatural being for him, although he sat there so sociably and scolded away so gently. Not to know every lesson, for him was impossible ; and if he got a smile or a stroke on his head after he had recited it, he was warm and happy for the whole day.

It always made the deepest impression on the children, when the schoolmaster, before singing, made a little speech to them, and, at least once a week, read aloud some little verses, which were about loving one's neighbor. When he read the first of these verses, his voice trembled, although he had now read it twenty or thirty years.

But when the whole hymn was said, and he had paused a moment, he looked at them, and his eyes twinkled :

“Up! you young rascals, and go peaceably home, without making any noise: go quietly, that I may hear only good reports of you, little folks.”

While they were making the worst possible confusion to find their books and dinner-pails, he shouted above the noise, —

“Come again to-morrow as soon as it is light, or I shall come and whip you: come again at the right time, girls and boys, and we will be industrious.”





CHAPTER IV.

OF Oeyvind's further progress, there is little to relate, until a year before confirmation. He read in the morning, worked during the day, and played in the evening.

As he had an unusually lively disposition, it was not long before the children of the neighborhood gladly resorted where he was to be found. In front of the farm a high hill ran down to the bay, with the cliff on one side, and the wood on the other, as has been before described; and during the whole winter it was a coasting ground every pleasant evening, and on Sundays, for all the children of the district. Oeyvind was leader on the hill, owned two sleds, "The Fast Trotter," and "The Slow Coach;" the latter he lent to larger parties, the former he steered himself, taking Marit in his lap.

At that time, the first thing Oeyvind did, on waking, was to look out and see if it was thawing, and if he saw that the gray mist hung over the bushes on the other side of the bay, or he heard the drops dripping from the roof, he was as long about dressing, as if there were nothing to be done that day. But if he awoke, and particularly on a Sunday, and found clear, cold, sparkling weather, best clothes, and no work, only catechism or church in

the morning, and then the whole afternoon and evening free,—heigh! the boy sprung with one leap out of bed, dressed himself as if for a fire, and could hardly eat any thing. As soon as it was afternoon, and the first boy came on his snow-shoes along the side of the road, swinging his stick over his head, and shouting so that it re-echoed in the hills round the water, and then another after him on his sled, and another, another,—away went Oeyvind with the “Fast Trotter,” bounded down the long hill, and stopped only among the last comers with a long, ringing shout, which stretched along the bay from hill to hill, and died away in the distance.

Then he would look round for Marit; but if she was already there, he did not trouble himself further about her.

It was one Christmas, when the boy as well as the girl might be about sixteen or seventeen years old, and were both to be confirmed in the spring. The last day of the year there was to be a great party at the upper Heide farm, at Marit’s grandparents’, by whom she had been brought up, and who had been promising her this party for three years; but it was not till the holidays of this year that it was brought about. There Oeyvind was invited.

It was a half-clear, mild evening; no stars were to be seen; the next day it could not help raining. A sleepy kind of wind blew over the snow, which was swept away here and there on the white Heide fields; in other spots it had drifted. Along the side of the road, where there lay but little snow, there was ice which stretched along blue-black between the snow and the bare field, and peeped out in patches as far as one could see. Along the mountains there had been avalanches; in their track it was dark and bare, but on both sides bright and covered with snow, except where the birch-trees were

packed together in black masses. There was no water to be seen, but half-naked marshes and morasses lay under the deeply fissured, melancholy-looking mountain. The farms lay in thick clusters in the middle of the plain. In the darkness of the winter evening, they looked like black lamps, from which light shot over the fields, now from one window, now from another; to judge by the lights, it seemed as if they were busy inside.

Children, grown-up and half-grown-up, were flocking together from all directions: the smaller number walked along the road; but they, too, left it when they came near the farms; and there stole along one under the shadow of the stable, a couple near the granary; some ran for a long time behind the barn, screaming like foxes, others answered far away like cats, one stood behind the wash-house, and barked like a cross, old, crack-voiced dog, until there became a general hunt. The girls came along in great flocks, and had some boys, mostly little boys, with them, who gathered around them along the road to seem like young men. When such a swarm of girls arrived at the farm, and one or a couple of the grown-up boys saw them, the girls separated, flew into the passages between the buildings, or down in the garden, and had to be dragged into the house, one by one. Some were so bashful that Marit had to be sent for, and compel them to come in. Sometimes, too, there came one who had not originally been invited, and whose intention was not at all to go in, but only to look on, until it turned out that she would just take one little dance. Those whom Marit liked much, she invited into a little room where the old people themselves were, the old man sitting smoking and grandmamma walking about. There they got something to drink, and were kindly spoken to. Oeyvind was not among them, and that struck him as rather strange.

The best fiddler of the district could not come so early, so until his arrival they had to get along with the old one, a workman, who went by the name of Gray Knut. He knew four dances; viz., two Spring dances, a Halling, and an old, so-called Napoleon waltz; but little by little he had been obliged to turn the Halling into Schottisch by altering the time, and a Spring dance in the same manner had become Polka Mazurka. Now he struck up, and the dance began. Oeyvind did not dare to join in immediately, for too many grown-up ones were there; but the half grown-up soon banded together, pushed each other forward, drank a little strong ale for encouragement, and then Oeyvind came forward with them. It grew hot in the room: the merriment and ale went to their heads. Marit was taken out on the floor more than the others that evening, probably because the party was at her grandparents', and this caused Oeyvind also often to look over at her; but she was always dancing with others. He wished very much to dance with her himself, and so he sat through one dance so as to rush over to her as soon as it was over; and this he did; but a tall, dark-complexioned fellow with thick hair threw himself in front of him.

"Back, youngster!" he shouted, pushing Oeyvind, so that the latter nearly fell backwards over Marit. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before, never had any one been otherwise than kind to him, never had he been called "Youngster," when he wished to join in: he blushed scarlet, but said nothing, and drew back to where the new fiddler, who had just arrived, had sat down, and was busy tuning up his fiddle. All was still among the flock: they were waiting to hear the first loud notes of "himself." He tried and tuned: it lasted a long time, but finally he dashed in with a Spring dance; the boys

shouted and jumped, and couple after couple swung into the circle. Oeyvind looked at Marit, as she danced with the thick-haired man: she laughed over the man's shoulder, so that her white teeth glistened; and Oeyvind was conscious of a strange, sharp pain in his breast, for the first time in his life.

He looked longer and longer at her: but, in whatever way he looked, it seemed to him as if Marit were quite grown up; it cannot be so, he thought, for she still coasts down hill with us. But grown up she was, nevertheless: and the thick-haired man pulled her, after the dance was over, down on to his lap; she glided off, still remaining, however, sitting by his side.

Oeyvind looked at the man: he wore a fine, blue cloth suit, blue checked shirt, and silk cravat; his face was small, with sharp, blue eyes, and laughing, scornful mouth. He was handsome. Oeyvind looked more and more, — looked at last at himself: he had got new trousers at Christmas, with which he was much pleased, but now he saw it was only gray frieze; his jacket was of the same material, but old and dark; his vest of checked homespun was also old, and with two metal buttons and one black one. He looked around, and thought very few were so poorly dressed as he. Marit had on a black waist of fine stuff, a silver brooch in her neckerchief, and a folded silk kerchief in her hand. She wore on the back of her head a little black silk cap, which was tied under the chin with broad, striped, silk ribbon. She was red and white, laughed, the man talked with her and laughed, the music struck up, and they were to dance again. A comrade came out, and sat down by his side.

“Why! don't you dance, Oeyvind?” he asked kindly.

“Oh, no,” said Oeyvind: “I don't look like it.”

“Don’t look like it?” asked his comrade; but before he could continue, Oeyvind said, —

“Who is that one in the blue cloth suit, who is dancing with Marit?”

“That is John Hatlen: the one who has been away at an agricultural school a long time, and is going to take the farm now.”

At the same moment, Marit and John sat down.

“Who is that boy with light hair, sitting over by the fiddler, glowering at me?” asked John.

At that, Marit laughed, and said, —

“That is the laborer’s boy at Pladsen.”

Oeyvind had indeed always known he was a laborer’s boy; but before now he had never felt it. It seemed to him as though he were shrunk in body, shorter than all the others; in order to hold his head up, he had to try and think of all which had hitherto made him happy and proud, from the coasting-hill to each encouraging word. When he also thought of his father and mother, who were now sitting at home, thinking that he was happy, it seemed as if he could hardly keep from crying. All about him were laughing and joking, the fiddle scraped close up to his ear: there was a moment in which it seemed as if something black rose up before him; but then he remembered the school with all his comrades, and the schoolmaster, who patted him, and the minister, who at the last examination had given him a book, and said he was a clever boy; his father had himself sat by listening to him, and had smiled over to him.

“Be good now, Oeyvind,” he thought the schoolmaster said, taking him on his lap as when he was little. “Dear me! it is of so little account, all put together; and in fact all people are kind: it only appears as though they were not. We two will become clever, Oeyvind,

as clever as John Hatlen; will get good clothes, and dance with Marit in a light room, a hundred people, smile and talk together, church and ring together, bride and bridegroom, the minister, and I in the choir who laugh over to you, and mother in the house, and large farm, twenty cows, three horses, and Marit good and kind as at school."

The dance ceased: Oeyvind saw Marit on the bench in front of him, and John by her side, with his face close up to hers; he felt the sharp pain again in his breast, and it was as if he said to himself, it is really true, I am suffering.

At the same moment, Marit rose, and came straight over to where he was sitting. She bent down over him, and said, —

"You shall not sit and stare so jealously at me; you might understand people notice it; take some one now, and dance."

He did not answer, but looked at her, and could not keep back the tears which filled his eyes. She had already risen to go, when she saw it, and stopped: she became suddenly red as fire, turned round and went to her place, but there she turned again and sat down on another seat. John followed her immediately.

Oeyvind rose from the bench, went out among the people in the court, sat down in a little porch, and then, not knowing what he should do there, rose, but sat down again, for he might just as well sit there as in another place. He did not care about going home, nor did he care to go in again: it was quite the same to him. He was not capable of reflecting on any thing which had passed; he did not wish to think of it; nor would he think of the future, for there was nothing to which he looked forward.

But what is it, then, I am thinking of? he asked himself half aloud; and when he heard his own voice, he thought, you can still speak, can you laugh? And he tried it: yes, he could laugh; and so he laughed, loud, still louder; and then he thought, it was too funny that he should sit there quite alone and laugh. But Hans, the comrade who had sat by his side, came out after him.

“For Heaven’s sake, what are you laughing at?” he asked, and stopped in front of the porch. At that, Oeyvind was silent. Hans remained standing, as if he were waiting to see what would happen next: Oeyvind rose, looked carefully around, and then said in a low voice, —

“Now, I will tell you, Hans, why I have been so happy before: it is because I have not really cared for any one; but from the day we care for some one, we are no longer happy,” and he burst into tears.

“Oeyvind!” was whispered out in the court; “Oeyvind!” was repeated again a little louder. It must be she, he thought. “Yes,” he answered, also whispering, wiped his eyes quickly, and came forward. A woman stole softly over the court-yard.

“Are you there?” she asked.

“Yes,” he answered, and stood still.

“Who is with you?”

“It is Hans.”

“But Hans would go?”

“No, no,” begged Oeyvind.

She came now close up to them, but slowly; and it was Marit.

“You went away so soon,” she said to Oeyvind. He did not know what he should answer to this; thereupon, she also grew confused, and they were all three silent.

But Hans stole away little by little. The two remained, not looking at each other, nor stirring. Then she said in a whisper, —

“I have gone the whole evening with some Christmas goodies in my pocket for you, Oeyvind; but I have not had any chance to give them to you before.” She pulled out a few apples, a slice of a cake from town, and a little half-pint bottle, which she thrust over towards him, and said he could keep. Oeyvind took them.

“Thank you,” said he, and stretched out his hand: hers was warm; he dropped it immediately, as if he had burnt himself.

“You have danced a good deal this evening?”

“Yes: I have,” she answered; “but you have not danced much,” she added.

“No: I have not.”

“Why not?”

“Oh” —

“Oeyvind.”

“What?”

“Why did you sit and look so at me?”

“Oh, — Marit!”

“Yes?”

“Why didn’t you like to have me look at you?”

“There were so many people.”

“You danced a good deal with John Hatlen this evening.”

“Oh, yes!”

“He dances well.”

“Do you think so?”

“Oh, yes! I do not know how it is, but this evening I cannot bear to have you dance with him, Marit.” He turned away: it had cost him an effort to say it.

“I do not understand you, Oeyvind.”

“Nor do I understand it myself: it is so stupid of me. Farewell, Marit: I am going now.” He took a step without looking round. Then she called after him, —

“It is a mistake what you thought you saw, Oeyvind.”

He stopped. “That you are already a grown-up girl is not a mistake.” He did not say what she had expected, and so she was silent. But in the mean time she saw the light from a pipe directly in front of her: it was her grandfather, who had just turned the corner, and was passing by. He stopped: —

“So you are here, are you, Marit?”

“Yes.”

“Whom are you talking to?”

“Oeyvind.”

“Whom, do you say?”

“Oeyvind Pladsen.”

“Oh! the workman’s boy at Pladsen: come, and follow me in directly.”





CHAPTER V.

WHEN Oeyvind opened his eyes on the following morning, it was after a long, refreshing sleep and happy dreams. Marit had been lying on the cliff, and throwing leaves down on him: he had caught them, and thrown them up again; they went up and down in a thousand colors and forms, and the sun shone on the cliff, which glittered from summit to base. When he awoke, he looked around to find them again: then he remembered the day before, and the same dull, aching pain in his breast came over him. That I shall never get rid of, he thought, and felt a languor, as if the whole future had nothing to offer him.

“Now you have slept a long time,” said his mother, who was seated by his side, spinning. “Up now, and eat your breakfast: your father is already in the forest, cutting wood.” It was as if this voice helped him: he rose, feeling a little more courage. His mother must have been thinking of her own dancing days; for she sat and hummed to the noise of the spinning-wheel, while he dressed himself and ate his breakfast. This humming made him rise from the table and go to the window: the same dulness and dissatisfaction came over him, and he was obliged to rouse himself, and think of work. The

weather had changed: the air was a little colder, so that what yesterday had threatened to fall in rain, fell to-day as wet snow. He put on woollen socks, a fur cap, sailor's jacket and mittens, said farewell, and went off with his axe over his shoulder.

The snow fell slowly in large, wet flakes; he toiled up, over the sliding hill, so as to turn into the forest on the left: never, winter or summer, had he climbed up the hills where they coasted, without thinking of something which made him happy, or to which he was looking forward with pleasure. Now it was a heavy, weary road. He slipped in the wet snow; his knees were stiff, either from the party of the day before or from languor: now he felt that it was all over with the coastings down hill for this year, and, with that, for ever. It was something else he longed for, as he went in among the tree-trunks where the snow fell softly. A frightened ptarmigan screamed and flew up a few yards off, and every thing else stood as if waiting for a word, which never was spoken. But what it was he longed for, he did not exactly know: only it was nothing at home, nor was it any thing away from home, neither pleasure nor work: it was something far aloft, soaring away like a song. Soon this took the form of a certain desire, which was to be confirmed in the spring, and on that occasion to be Number One. His heart beat as he thought of it; and before he could as yet hear his father's axe in the trembling little trees, this wish throbbed in him with greater intensity than any thing else had done since he was born.

His father, as usual, spoke but little to him: they both chopped and dragged the wood together into piles. Once in a while they chanced to meet each other, and on one such occasion Oeyvind muttered listlessly, "A workman must toil very hard."

"He like others," said his father, as he spit in the palm of his hand, and took up the axe.

When the tree was felled, and his father had dragged it up to the pile, Oeyvind said: "If you had a farm of your own, you would not have to work so hard."

"Oh! then I suppose there would be other things to weigh upon us;" and he took up the axe with both hands.

His mother now came up with dinner for them, and they sat down. His mother was in good spirits: she sat humming, and beat her feet in time. "What shall you do when you are grown up, Oeyvind?" she said suddenly.

"For a workman's son, there are not many ways open," he answered.

"The schoolmaster says you must go to the Seminary," said she.

"Can one go there free?" asked Oeyvind.

"The school fund pays," answered his father, who was eating.

"Would you like that?" asked his mother.

"I would like to learn something, but not to be schoolmaster."

They were all silent for a while. She hummed again and gazed forwards; but Oeyvind walked away and sat down by himself.

"We do not need to borrow of the school fund," said she, when the boy had gone. Her husband looked at her.

"Poor people like us?"

"I do not like it, Thore, that you always pretend you are poor, when you are not."

They both cast a side glance down after the boy, to see if he could hear it. Then the father looked sharply at his wife.

"Your talk shows how much sense you have."

She laughed.

"It is just like not thanking God, that things have prospered so well for us," said she, and grew serious.

"He can certainly be thanked, without our wearing silver buttons," was the father's opinion.

"Yes, but to let Oeyvind go to the dance, looking as he did yesterday, is not thanking Him either."

"Oeyvind is a workman's son."

"He can be dressed properly for all that, when we can afford it."

"Talk about it so that he can hear it himself."

"He does not hear us, or I might be tempted to do so," she said, and looked resolutely at her husband, who was gloomy, and laid down his spoon to take a pipe.

"Such a miserable place as we have!" said he.

"I must laugh at you, who are always talking about the place: why do you never mention the mills?"

"Oh! you and the mills; I believe you can't bear to hear them go."

"I thank God that I can: might they only go night and day!"

"Now they have been standing still since before Christmas."

"But people do not grind in the Christmas holidays."

"They grind when there is water; but since they have got a mill at New River, it goes poorly here."

"The schoolmaster did not say so to-day."

"I shall let a more discreet fellow than the schoolmaster take care of our money."

"Yes: least of all should he say any thing to your own wife."

Thore made no answer to this: he had just lighted his pipe, and now leaned back against a bundle of fagots. He turned his eyes away to avoid first his wife's and then

his son's glance ; and fixed them on an old crow's nest, which hung half-overturned from a fir branch.

Oeyvind sat by himself with the future stretched out before him like a long, smooth sheet of ice, across which his thoughts flew from one shore to the other. He felt that poverty hemmed him in on all sides ; and therefore all his thoughts were bent on the means of breaking his way through. It had certainly separated him from Marit for ever : he regarded her as half-engaged to John Hatlen ; but his whole aim was to outstrip him and her in the race of life. Never again to be pushed, as he was yesterday ; and with that view, to keep himself out of the way, until, by the help of Almighty God, he had become something. This occupied his whole mind, and there did not arise within him a single doubt as to whether he would succeed. He had a dim idea, that study was the means by which he was most likely to succeed : to what end that should conduct, he must think of later.

There was coasting in the evening ; the children came to the hill, but not Oeyvind. He sat by the chimney-corner, and read, and he had not a moment to waste. The children waited a long time : at length, several, becoming impatient, came up to the window, laid their faces against the pane, and shouted in to him ; but he pretended that he did not hear. Others came, and evening after evening they waited outside in great amazement ; but he turned his back to them, and read, toiling faithfully to keep his attention fixed on his book. Afterwards, he heard that Marit was not among them. He read with an industry which even his father was obliged to say went too far. He grew grave ; his face, which had been so soft and round, became thinner and sharper ; his eyes, harder ; he sung rarely, and never played ; it seemed

as if he never had enough time. When the temptation came over him, it was as if some one whispered, "Later, later!" and always, "later." The children slid, shouted, and laughed awhile as before; but when they could not entice him to come out to them, either by their own merriment in coasting, or by calling to him through the window-pane, little by little they stayed away; they found other playgrounds, and soon the hill stood deserted.

But the schoolmaster soon remarked it was not the old Oeyvind, who studied because he was told to, and played because that was a necessity for him. He often talked with him, and sought to win his confidence; but he could not succeed in finding the boy's heart so easily as in former days. He talked also with the parents; and, according to an agreement with them, he came down one Sunday evening, late in the winter, and said, after he had sat awhile, "Come, Oeyvind, let us go out: I should like to talk with you." Oeyvind put on his things, and followed him. They took their way up towards the Heide farms. A lively conversation was kept up, but on nothing of importance: when they had come near the farms, the schoolmaster turned off in the direction of one which lay in the centre; and when they had come a little farther along, they heard shouting and merriment proceeding from the house.

"What is going on here?" inquired Oeyvind.

"They are having a dance," said the schoolmaster
"Shall we not go in?"

"No."

"Will you not join in a dance, boy?"

"No; not yet."

"Not yet? When, then?"

He did not answer.

"What do you mean by *yet*?"

As the boy did not answer, the schoolmaster said, "Come now, no such nonsense."

"No: I'm not going."

He was very decided, and at the same time agitated.

"That your own schoolmaster should stand here and beg you to go and dance!"

There was a long pause.

"Is there any one in there, whom you are afraid to see?"

"How can I know who is there."

"But could there be any one?"

Oeyvind was silent. Thereupon, the schoolmaster went straight up to him, and laid his hand on his shoulder: "Are you afraid to see Marit?"

Oeyvind looked down: his breath came heavy and short.

"Tell me, Oeyvind."

Oeyvind was silent.

"Perhaps you are ashamed to confess it, because you are not confirmed yet; but tell me without minding that, Oeyvind, and you shall never regret it."

Oeyvind looked up, but could not get the word out, and turned away his eyes

"You have not been happy either of late: does she like any one else better than you?"

Oeyvind still kept silence. The schoolmaster felt a little hurt, and turned away from him: they went back.

When they had walked along some distance, the schoolmaster stopped for Oeyvind to come up with him.

"I suppose you wish very much to be confirmed," said

"Yes."

"Then what do you think of doing?"

"I should like to enter the Seminary."

"And then be schoolmaster?"

"No."

"You think that is not great enough."

Oeyvind was silent. Again they walked on for a distance.

"After you have been at the Seminary, what will you do then?"

"I have not thought much about that."

"If you had money, of course you would like to buy yourself a farm."

"Yes; but keep the mills."

"Then it is best for you to go to the Agricultural School."

"Do they learn as much there as at the Seminary?"

"Oh, no! but they learn what is useful to them later."

"Do they get marks there also?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"I should like to be clever."

"That you can certainly be without marks."

Again they walked along in silence, until they saw Pladsen: a light shone from the house; the cliff hung black over it in the winter evening; beneath lay the smooth glimmering ice, but there was no snow on the forest which skirted the little bay; the moon sailed overhead, and reflected the forest trees on the ice.

"It is beautiful here at Pladsen," said the schoolmaster.

Sometimes Oeyvind could look upon it with the same eyes as when his mother used to tell him tales, or when he used to slide down the hill; now it was so once more: all lay raised and clear before him.

"Yes: it is beautiful here," he said, but sighed.

"Your father has found all he wanted in this place: you, too, might have enough in it."

The happy aspect of the spot disappeared in an in-

stant. The schoolmaster stood, as if he expected an answer; receiving none, he shook his head, and entered the house with Oeyvind. He sat with them awhile, but was more silent than talkative, at which the others also grew silent. When he took leave, both the husband and wife followed him outside the door: it seemed as if they both expected him to say something. In the mean time they stood gazing out into the winter night.

"It has become so unusually quiet here," said the mother at length, "since the children have gone elsewhere to play."

"Nor have you any longer any *child* in the house," said the schoolmaster.

The mother understood what he meant.

"Oeyvind has not been happy of late," said she.

"Oh, no! he who is ambitious is not happy;" and he looked up with an old man's calm into God's quiet heavens above.





CHAPTER VI.

HALF a year after, in the following autumn (Confirmation had been postponed until then), the children who had been preparing for the ceremony, were sitting in the servants' hall at the parsonage, awaiting their examination: among them Oeyvind Pladsen and Marit Heidefarms. Marit had just come down from the minister, who had given her a beautiful book and much nomination: she was laughing and talking with her friends on all sides, and cast a glance round among the boys. Marit was now a full-grown girl, easy and unconstrained in her manners; and the boys as well as the girls knew that the richest fellow in the parish, John Hatlen, was courting her; she might indeed be happy, as she sat there. Down by the door stood some girls and boys, who had not been accepted: they were crying, while Marit and her friends laughed; amongst them was a little boy in his father's boots and his mother's Sunday kerchief.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" sobbed he: "I don't dare to go home again."

Those who had not yet been called up, were seized with a powerful feeling of sympathy: there was a general silence. Anxiety choked both throat and eyes: they

could not see distinctly, nor could they swallow, of which there was a constant necessity.

One sat and reckoned over how much he knew; and, although some hours before he had found out that he knew every thing, he now ascertained, with the same degree of certainty, that he knew nothing, not even how to read from the book.

Another made out a list of his sins, from as far back as he could remember, up to the time he was sitting here; and he did not think it was at all to be wondered at, if the Lord allowed him to be set aside.

A third sat and sought to gather omens from every thing about him: if the clock, which was just going to strike, did not strike before he got to twenty, then he would pass; if the one he heard in the entry turned out to be the stable-boy Lars, then he would pass; if the big raindrop which was travelling down the window reached the bottom of the pane, then he would pass. The last and decisive test should be, whether he got the right foot twisted round the left; and this was quite impossible for him.

A fourth felt convinced in his own mind, that if he were only questioned about Joseph in Bible history, and Baptism in the Catechism, or about Saul, or on the Domestic Duties, or about Jesus, or on the Commandments, or ———: he still sat enumerating, when he was called up.

A fifth had conceived a particular affection for the Sermon on the Mount: he had dreamt about the Sermon on the Mount; he was sure he would be questioned on the Sermon on the Mount; and he gabbled over to himself the Sermon on the Mount; he had to go outdoors to read over the Sermon on the Mount, when he was called up to be questioned on the great and small Prophets

The sixth thought of the minister, who was such a holy man, and knew his father so well : he thought, too, of the schoolmaster who had such a kind face, and of God, who was full of tender mercy, and had helped many before, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph ; and then he thought how his mother, brothers, and sisters were sitting at home praying for him, which certainly must help.

The seventh sat and renounced all he had thought of becoming in this world. Once he had thought of pushing it as far as king, once to general or minister : now that time was passed. But, up to the very moment of coming here, he had thought of going to sea, and becoming captain, perhaps pirate, and gaining enormous riches in trade : now he gave up, first, the riches, then the pirate, then the captain, mate, he stopped at sailor, at the utmost boatswain ; yes, it was even possible that he would not go to sea at all, but find some occupation on his father's farm.

The eighth felt more confident of his case, but still not quite certain, for even the cleverest was not certain. He thought of the clothes in which he was to be confirmed, what they should be used for if he were not accepted ; but if he got through, he was going to town to get a cloth suit, and come home again, and dance at Christmas, to the envy of all the boys, and amazement of all the girls.

The ninth reckoned in another way : he made out a little account-book with the Lord, in which he set down on one side "Debit," He shall let me pass ; and on the other side, as "Credit," then I will never tell any more lies, never slander, go to church regularly, let the girls alone, and give up swearing.

But the tenth thought that if Ole Hansen had been accepted last year, it was more than injustice if they did

not take him this year, who had always been better a school, and was besides of better family.

By his side sat the eleventh, who was meditating the most fearful plans of vengeance in case of being set aside, either to burn down the school-house, or to run away from the parish, and return as the avenging judge of the minister and whole school committee, but magnanimously allow mercy to usurp the place of justice. As a beginning, he would get a situation in the house of the minister of the neighboring parish, and next year stand Number One there, and answer so that the whole parish would be astonished.

But the twelfth sat by himself under the clock, with both hands in his pockets, and looked mournfully over the assembly. No one here knew what a burden he bore, in what a responsibility he stood. At home, there was one who knew; for he was engaged. A large, long-legged spider crawled across the floor, and approached his foot: he generally trod on the disgusting insect; but to-day he lifted his foot tenderly, that it might go where it liked in peace. His voice was gentle as a prayer, his eyes said constantly that all men were good, his hands made a humble movement out of his pockets up to his hair, to stroke it down flatter. If he could only creep gently through this dangerous needle's eye, he would take care to grow out again on the other side, chew tobacco, and announce his engagement.

Down on a low footstool, with his legs up under him, the restless thirteenth was sitting: his small, flashing eyes darted round the room three times in a second; and through his violent, stubborn head whirled in motley confusion the thoughts of all the twelve, from the mightiest hope to the most crushing doubt, from the humblest resolutions to the most destructive plans of ven

geance against the whole parish ; and in the mean time he had eaten up all the loose flesh on his right thumb, and was now occupied with his nails, sending great pieces across the floor.

Oeyvind sat over by the window : he had been up, and answered every thing which was asked him ; but the minister had not said any thing, nor the schoolmaster either. For more than half a year he had thought of what they would both say, when they found out how hard he had worked ; and now he felt much disappointed as well as mortified. There sat Marit, who, for far less exertion and acquirements, had received both encouragement and reward : it was just to stand high in her eyes, he had worked ; and now she won, smiling, what he had toiled to attain with so much self-denial. Her laughter and joking burned into his soul ; the freedom with which she moved about pained him deeply. He had carefully avoided speaking to her since that evening : years should pass, he thought ; but the sight of her sitting there, so happy and superior, weighed him to the ground, and all his proud resolutions drooped like wet leaves.

He endeavored, however, gradually to shake off these feelings. All depended on whether he got Number One that day, and this he expected. The schoolmaster generally remained a little later with the minister, to arrange the children's marks, and afterwards he came down and told them the result : it was not the final decision, but only what he and the minister had agreed on for the present. The conversation in the room became livelier, after every one who was examined had been accepted ; but now the ambitious ones began to divide themselves off from the happy ones. The latter left, as soon as they found some one to go with, to communicate their success to their parents, or stood waiting for others, who

were not yet ready: the former, on the contrary, grew more and more quiet, and their eyes were anxiously fixed on the door.

At length, the children had all finished: the last had come down, and now the schoolmaster was talking with the minister. Oeyvind looked at Marit: she was as happy as before, but still remained sitting, waiting either for some one else or for her own pleasure, he did not know which. How beautiful Marit had grown! Her dazzling complexion was like none he had ever seen before; her nose was a little turned up; her mouth, half-smiling. Her eyes were half closed, unless she looked directly at some one: but then her glance always seemed unexpectedly tender, when it did come, and as if she herself would add that she meant nothing by it; at this moment she smiled a little. Her hair was rather dark than light; but it was wavy, and came forwards on both sides, which, taken together with her half-shut eyes, gave a hidden expression to her face, not easily understood. One could not be quite sure whom she was looking for when she was sitting among others, nor exactly what she was thinking of when she happened to turn round and speak to anybody; for she seemed to take back again directly what she gave. Under all that, John Hatlen must be hidden, thought Oeyvind, but still kept on looking at her.

Now the schoolmaster came. All left their places and stormed about him: —

“What number have I?” — “And I?” — “And I?” — “I?”

“Hush! you great, over-grown boys: no disturbance here. Be quiet now, and you shall hear, children.” He looked slowly round: “You are number 2,” said he to a boy with blue eyes, who was looking beseechingly

at him ; and the boy danced out of the circle. " You are number 3," he rapped a red-haired, brisk little fellow, who was pulling his coat. " You are number 5 you, number 8," &c. He caught sight of Marit: " You are number 1 of the girls." She turned scarlet over her face and neck, but tried to smile. " You, number 12, have been lazy, you rogue, and a great mischief-maker. You, number 11 ; we could not expect to have it better, little boy. You, number 13, must study hard, and come to the last examination, or it will turn out badly for you !"

Oeyvind could not bear it any longer : number 1 had certainly not been mentioned ; but he had been standing the whole time, so that the schoolmaster would see him.

" Schoolmaster !" He did not hear. " Schoolmaster !" Three times he had to repeat it, before he was heard. At last, the schoolmaster looked at him : —

" Number 9 or 10, don't remember exactly which," said he, and turned round to another.

" Who is number 1 then ?" asked Hans, who was Oeyvind's best friend.

" It is not you, curly-head," said the schoolmaster, rapping him over the hand with a roll of paper.

" Who is it, then ?" asked several. " Who is it ? yes : who is it ?"

" That he will know who gets the number," answered the schoolmaster, severely : he would not have any more questions. " Go home now quietly, children : be thankful to God, and rejoice your parents' hearts ! Thank your old schoolmaster, too : you would have been nicely left in the lurch if it hadn't been for him !"

They thanked him, laughed, and departed merrily ; for now, that they were going home to their parents, they all felt happy. Only one was left, who could not find his books directly ; and who, after he had found them, sat down, as if he were going to begin studying again

The schoolmaster went over to him : —

“Now, Oeyvind, are you not going with the others?”

He did not answer.

“Why do you open your books?”

“I was going to see what I had answered wrong to-day.”

“I do not think you have answered any thing wrong.”

Then Oeyvind looked at him. Tears filled his eyes : he still continued looking at him, while they coursed down his cheeks, one by one ; but he did not say a word. The schoolmaster sat down in front of him : —

“Are you not glad that it is all happily over?”

His lips trembled, but he did not answer.

“Your mother and father will be very glad,” said the schoolmaster, looking at him.

Oeyvind struggled awhile to speak. At length, he inquired, in a low voice, hesitating as he spoke : —

“Is it—because I—am a workman’s son—that I stand number 9 or 10?”

“Probably that is the reason,” answered the schoolmaster.

“Then it does no good for me to work,” said he, drearily ; and all his dreams vanished away. Suddenly he raised his head, lifted his right hand, and bringing it down on the table with all his might, burst into violent sobs.

The schoolmaster let him lie there and weep as long as he would. It lasted a long time ; but the schoolmaster waited until the sobs grew more childlike. Then taking his head in both hands, he raised it up, and gazed into the tear-stained face : —

“Do you think it is God who has been with you now?” said he, drawing the boy up to him.

Oeyvind still sobbed, but less violently. The tears

flowed more slowly ; but he dared neither look at him who asked, nor answer.

“ This, Oeyvind, is a merited recompense. You have not studied from affection for your religion or your parents : you have studied from vanity.”

There was silence in the room after every thing the schoolmaster said. Oeyvind felt his glance resting on him, and he grew milder and humbler under it.

“ With such anger in your heart, you could not have come forward to make a covenant with God : would you, Oeyvind ?”

“ No,” he stammered, as well as he could.

“ And if you stood there with vain joy at being number 1, would you not stand there with a sin ?”

“ Yes,” he whispered ; and his lips trembled.

“ You still love me, Oeyvind ?”

“ Yes ;” and he looked up for the first time.

“ Then I will tell you that it was I who had you put down ; for I love you so much, Oeyvind.”

The other looked at him, winked several times, and the tears coursed rapidly down.

“ You are not angry with me for that ?”

“ No :” he looked up full in his face, and then burst out crying.

“ My dear child, I will stay by you as long as I live.

He waited for him until he had collected his books and was ready, and said he would accompany him home. They walked slowly along : at first, Oeyvind was still silent, struggling with himself.

“ Yes : now we shall think of accomplishing something in life,” said the schoolmaster, “ and not running after shadows and numbers. What do you say to the Seminary ?”

“ Yes : I should like that very much !”

“You mean the Agricultural School?”

“Yes.”

“That is, without doubt, the best for you: that opens other prospects besides a schoolmaster’s position.”

“But how shall I get there? I feel a strong inclination, but I have no means to pay for it.”

“Be good and industrious, and we shall find means.”

Oeyvind felt quite overpowered with gratitude. His eyes sparkled: he drew his breath lightly, and felt wafted along by that boundless tenderness which springs up within us when we meet with unexpected kindness from our fellow-men. One imagines for a moment, that his whole future will be like wandering in fresh mountain air, where one seems rather to be borne along than to walk. And yet the burden fell on him again, as they came in sight of the house at Pladsen.

Both his parents were in the room, and had been sitting there in quiet expectation, although it was during the hours for labor, and at a busy time. The schoolmaster entered first: Oeyvind followed.

“Now!” said his father, laying aside a psalm-book, in which he had just been reading a “Prayer for a Catechumen.”

His mother stood by the chimney-corner, not daring to say any thing. She laughed, but her hand was unsteady: apparently, she was expecting something agreeable, but did not wish to betray it.

“I only wanted to come to gladden you with the news that he answered every question which was put him; and the minister said, after Oeyvind had gone, that he has not had a cleverer pupil.”

“Oh, really!” said his mother, much affected.

“Well, that was right,” said his father, and cleared his throat uneasily.

After a long silence, his mother asked, softly, —

“What number will he have?”

“Number 9 or 10,” said the schoolmaster, quietly.

His mother looked at her husband, — he, first at her, then at Oeyvind.

“A workman’s son cannot expect more,” said he, in a low voice.

Oeyvind looked at him again. It seemed as if there were something rising up in his throat again; but he kept it down by thinking of kind things, one after another, until he had regained his self-control.

“Now I had better go,” said the schoolmaster; nodded, and turned towards the door.

Both the parents followed him out on to the doorstep. Here the schoolmaster took a quid of tobacco, and said, smiling, —

“He will be number 1, all the same; but it is not worth while for him to know any thing about it, before the day comes.”

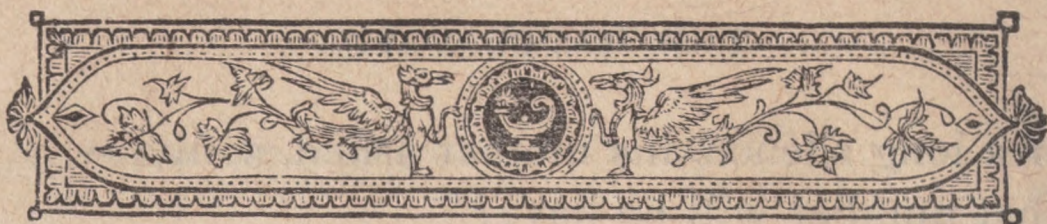
“No, no,” said his father, nodding assent.

“No, no,” said his mother, also nodding. Then she took the schoolmaster by the hand: “We owe you many thanks for all you do for him,” said she.

“Yes: we owe you thanks,” said his father.

“Oh! I have thanks enough in myself,” answered the schoolmaster; “for the fact is, I love him!” He nodded and went away; but they stood a long time, gazing after him.





CHAPTER VII.

DURING the days they were preparing for the Confirmation at Pladsen, they also made ready for his journey to the Agricultural School; for this was to take place the day after. Tailor and shoemaker were sitting in the house, his mother baking in the kitchen, and his father working on a chest. They talked much about what he would cost them in the two coming years, whether he would be able to come home the first Christmas, perhaps not the second one either; and how hard it would be to be separated so long. They spoke also of the love he ought to bear his parents, who were willing to make so many sacrifices for their child's sake. Oeyvind sat like one who had been out in the world and tried his own fortune, but had been capsized, and was now picked up by kind people.

Such a feeling humility gives, and from that follows much more. As the great day drew nigh, he dared call himself prepared, and look forwards with a hopeful resignation. When Marit's image would present itself, he pushed it carefully aside, but felt a pang, as he did so. He tried to train himself to this, but, however, never made any progress; on the contrary, he felt each time a sharper pang. Therefore, he felt weary the last evening,

when, after a long self-examination, he prayed that the Lord would not try him in this point.

The schoolmaster arrived late in the day. They sat down together, after they had washed and dressed themselves nicely, as is customary the evening before going to communion or morning service. His mother was moved, his father silent. The parting was to follow the ceremony on the morrow; and it was uncertain, when they would sit down together again. The schoolmaster took out the psalm-books, read from them and sung, and then made a short prayer, just as the words came into his mind.

These four now sat together until late in the evening, each busied with his own thoughts; then they parted with the best wishes for the next day, and that which it was to consecrate. Oeyvind was obliged to admit, as he went to bed, that he had never felt so happy before. This evening he gave it a special interpretation: he understood by that, I have never before gone to bed feeling so resigned to God's will and so happy in it. Marit's face rose up again before him, and the last he was conscious of was, that he lay and tempted himself; not quite happy, not quite; and that he answered, yes, quite; but again, not quite; yes, quite; no, not quite.

When he awoke, he remembered directly what day it was, prayed and felt strong, as one does in the morning. He had slept in the attic by himself since the summer: now he rose, and put on carefully his new, handsome clothes; for he had never had such before. There was in particular a round, cloth jacket, of which he had to feel over and over again, before he grew accustomed to it. When he had put on his collar, he hung up a little looking-glass, and for the fourth time drew on his jacket. Now when he saw his own delighted face, with the un-

sually light hair surrounding it, reflected laughing in the glass, it struck him that it must be vanity again. "Yes, but one must be allowed to be clean and well-dressed," answered he, drawing his face away from the glass, as if it were a sin to look in it. — "Yes; but not quite so fond of one's self as far as that is concerned." — "No, certainly not: but the Lord must also like to have one pleased at looking well." — "That may be; but He would certainly like it better if you did so without paying so much attention to it yourself." — "That is true; but see, that comes now from every thing's being so new." — "Yes; but then you must not allow yourself to become confirmed in the habit." He caught himself carrying on such a self-examining conversation, first on one point, then on another, so that not a single sin should fall on the day and stain it; but at the same time he knew that there would be more to come.

When he came down, his parents sat quite dressed, waiting breakfast for him. He went up to them and shook hands, thanking them for the clothes, and received in return, a "wear them out in good health." They sat down to the table, prayed silently, and ate. His mother cleared away the table, and brought in the luncheon-box for their journey to church. His father put on his jacket, his mother fastened her kerchiefs, they took their psalm-books, locked up the house, and set out. As soon as they came on the upper road, they met people on the way to church, driving and walking; those to be confirmed scattered among them, and here and there, in one of the groups, white-haired grandparents who could not refrain from coming out this one time more.

It was an autumn day without sunshine, as when the weather is about to change. Clouds gathered and dispersed again, sometimes one heavy mass turned into

twenty smaller ones, which chased across the sky, carrying orders for storm ; but below, on the earth, it was still calm, the foliage hung lifeless, and did not even rustle, the air was a little sultry ; people had taken their overcoats with them, but did not use them. An unusually large crowd had assembled round the church, which stood in an open space ; but the Confirmation children entered the church directly, to be arranged in their places before the service began. Then it was the schoolmaster in blue clothes, coat and small clothes, high boots, stiff necktie, and the pipe sticking out of his pocket behind, came down towards them, nodded and laughed, struck one on the shoulder, spoke a couple of words to another about answering loud and distinctly, and then came down to the poor-box, where Oeyvind stood, answering all his friend Hans' questions regarding his journey.

“ Good-day, Oeyvind : you look nice to-day.”

He took him by the collar as if he wished to speak to him.

“ Listen now : I think every thing good of you. Now I have talked with the minister : you are to keep your place ; go up, you are Number One ; answer distinctly.”

Oeyvind grew scarlet, and looked up at him amazed : the schoolmaster nodded, the boy took a few steps, stopped, took a few steps more, stopped ; yes, certainly it is so, he has spoken to the minister for me. He grew so warm and humble, and saw every thing before him in a wonderful splendor, and the boy walked rapidly up to his place.

“ You are going to be Number One, after all,” one whispered to him.

Yes,” answered Oeyvind, softly, but was not quite sure if he dared.

The assignment of places was over, the minister had

come, the bells were ringing, and the people pouring in. Then Oeyvind saw Marit Heidefarms standing just in front of him : she was also looking at him ; but they were both so awed by the sacredness of the place, that they dared not greet each other. He only saw she was dazzlingly beautiful, and had her hair uncovered ; but more he did not see. Oeyvind, who for more than half a year had been building such great plans about standing opposite to her, forgot, now that the time had come, both the place and her, and that he had ever thought of them.

After all was over, relations and acquaintances came to offer their congratulations ; after that, came his comrades to take leave of him, as they had heard that he should leave the next day ; then there came many little ones, with whom he had slid down hill, or whom he had assisted at school, and who now whimpered a little at parting. Last came the schoolmaster, took him and his parents silently by the hand, and made a sign to go : he wished to accompany them. The four were again together, and now it was to be the last evening. On the way there were many others who took leave of him, and wished him good luck ; but otherwise they had no conversation with each other, until they had sat down together at home.

The schoolmaster tried to keep up their spirits. The fact was, now the time had come, they all three dreaded two whole years' separation, as they, up to this time, had never been apart for a day ; but no one would acknowledge it. The later it grew, the more oppressed Oeyvind became : he wished to go out to gain a little tranquillity.

It was dusk now, and a strange whizzing in the air. He remained standing on the doorstep, and looked up. Then he heard his own name called from the brow of

the cliff, quite low: there was no deception, for it was repeated twice. He looked up, and distinguished a woman's form crouching between the trees and looking down.

"Who is it?" asked he.

"I hear you are going away," said she, in a low voice "so I had to come and say good-by, as you would not come to me."

"Goodness! is it you, Marit? I shall come up to you."

"No: don't do that. I have waited so long, and then I shall have to wait still longer: no one knows where I am, and I must hurry home."

"It was kind of you to come," said he.

"I could not bear to have you go off so, Oeyvind: we have known each other since we were children."

"Yes: so we have."

"And now we have not spoken to each other for half a year."

"No: we have not."

"We separated so strangely, too, that time."

"Yes: I think I must come up to you."

"Oh, no! do not do that. But tell me: you are not angry with me?"

"Goodness! how can you think so?"

"Good-by, then, Oeyvind; and thanks for all we have had together."

"No: Marit?"

"Yes: now I must go; they will miss me."

"Marit! Marit!"

"No: I dare not stay away longer, Oeyvind. Farewell!"

"Farewell!"

Afterwards he walked about as in a dream, and an-

swered absently, when they spoke to him. They ascribed it to his journey, as seemed most natural; and this, in fact, occupied his whole attention at the moment that the schoolmaster took leave in the evening, and put something into his hand, which he saw later was a five-dollar bill. But when he went to bed, he did not think of his journey, but of the words which had come down from the cliff, and gone up again. As a child she had not permission to come on the cliff, because her grandfather was afraid she would fall down. Perhaps she will come down for all that.





CHAPTER VIII.

DEAR PARENTS,—We have to study more at present than we did ; but I am no longer so much behind the others, so that it is not so difficult. And now I shall make many alterations on father's place when I come home ; for there is much that is wrong there, and it is wonderful that it has gone on as well as it has. But I shall set it to rights again, for I have learned a great deal already. I wish to go to some place where I can do all I now know ; therefore I must look about for a high post, when I have finished.

Here, they all say that John Hatlen is not so clever as they say at home with us ; but he has his own property, so it does not concern any one except himself.

Many, who come from here, get very high wages ; but the reason they are paid so well, is, that ours is the best agricultural school in the country. Some say that one in the next district is better ; but that is not true at all. Here, there are two words : one is called Theory, and the other P'ractice, and it is well to have them both ; and one is nothing without the other, but the latter is, however, the best. And the first word signifies to know the reason and motive in a work : but the other signifies

to be able to do the work ; as, take, for instance, a swamp, for there are many who know what they should do with a swamp, but do it wrong, nevertheless, because they do not know how. But many can do it without understanding the reason ; and so it may also go wrong, because there are many kinds of swamps. But here, at school, we learn both words. The superintendent is so clever, that there is not one who can be compared to him. At the last farmers' meeting for the whole country he conducted two inquiries : but the other school superintendents had only one each ; and it always turned out as he had said, when they had well thought it over. But at the previous meeting, when he was not there, there was only nonsense talked. The superintendent chose the lieutenant who teaches surveying, only on account of his cleverness. And he is so clever, that they say he was the best of all at the lieutenants' school.

The schoolmaster asks whether I go to church. Yes, certainly I go to church : for now the minister has got a vicar, and he preaches so that all in church are very much frightened ; and it is a pleasure to hear him. He belongs to the new religion, which they have in Christiania ; and people think he is too severe, but that is good for them.

At present we are studying much history, which we have not done before ; and it is strange to see all which has happened in the world, and especially with us : for we have always won,—except when we have lost ; and then we have been much the smaller number. Now we have liberty ; and that no other nation has so much of as we, except America, but they are not happy there. And we ought to love our liberty above every thing.

Now I will close for this time, for I have written a very long letter. The schoolmaster will read it and

when he answers for you, you must make him tell me some news about my friends, for that he himself never does.

With much love from your affectionate son,

O. THORESEN.

DEAR PARENTS, — Now I must tell you that there has been an examination here; and I stood remarkably well in many things, and very well in writing and surveying, but only tolerably in composition. That comes from my not having read enough, the superintendent says: and he has made me a present of some of Ole Vig's books, which are splendid; for I understand every thing in them. The superintendent is very kind to me: he tells me so many things. Every thing here is so insignificant in comparison with what there is abroad. We understand almost nothing, but learn all from the Scotch and Swiss; but from the Dutch we learn horticulture. Many travel over to these countries. In Sweden, too, they are much cleverer than we; and there the superintendent himself has been.

It will soon be a year since I have been here; and I thought I had learned a good deal: but when I heard what those who passed the examination knew, and when I think that neither do they know any thing, when they are together with foreigners, then I grow quite unhappy. And then the soil here in Norway is so poor, in comparison with what it is abroad, it does not repay us in the least for all we do for it. Furthermore, the people will not learn from others' experience; and, even if they would, and the soil were much better, then they have not money enough to cultivate it. It is wonderful that things have gone on even as well as they have.

I am in the first class now, and am to remain there a year, before I have finished. But most of my friends have left, and I long to come home. It seems as if I stood alone, although it is not so at all; but it is so strange, when one has been away a long time. I thought once, I should become so clever here; but it promises but poorly now.

What shall I occupy myself with, when I leave here? First, I shall of course come home: afterwards, I must find myself some situation; but it must not be far away.

Farewell now, my dear parents. Give my love to those who ask after me, and tell them that all is well with me; but that now I long to come home again.

Your affectionate son,

OEYVIND THORESEN PLADSEN

DEAR SCHOOLMASTER, — I hereby ask, whether you will deliver the enclosed letter, and not tell any one about it. If you will not, then you must burn it.

OEYVIND THORESEN PLADSEN.

TO THE MOST HONORED MARIT KNUDSDATTER NORDISTUEN
AT THE UPPER-HEIDE FARMS.

You will certainly be much surprised at receiving a letter from me; but that you must not be, for I only wish to know how you are. You must send me word as soon as possible, and in all points. Concerning myself, I have to say, that I shall have finished here in a year.

Most respectfully,

OEYVIND PLADSEN

TO MR. OEYVIND PLADSEN, AT THE AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL.

I have duly received your letter from the schoolmaster, and I will answer, since you ask me to. But I am afraid to, now you are so learned; and I have a letter-book, but that will not suit. So I shall try, and you must take the will for the deed; but you must not show it, for then you would not be what I think you to be. You must not keep it either, for then some one might easily see it; but you must burn it, and this you must promise me. There were so many things I would like to write about, but do not exactly dare. We have a good harvest, potatoes are at a high price, and here at the Heide farms we have enough of them. But the bear has been bad with the cattle in summer: he killed two cows for Ole Lower-farms, and injured one for our workman, so that they were obliged to kill her. I am weaving on a large piece it is like Scotch cloth, and it is difficult. And now I will tell you, that I am still at home, and others would like to have it otherwise. Now I have not more to write about, so farewell.

MARIT KNUDSATTER.

P.S. — Be sure and burn this letter.

TO OEYVIND PLADSEN, PUPIL AT THE AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL.

I have told you before, Oeyvind, that he who walks with God has a good inheritance. But now you shall hear my advice, and that is, not to take the world with eagerness and tribulation, but to put your trust in God, and let not your heart consume itself; for then you have another God besides Him. Thereafter, I must tell you that your father and mother are well, but I am suffering in my hip; for now the war breaks out afresh with all

I have suffered there. What youth sows, age must reap; and that holds true both of the mind and the body which is now smarting and throbbing, and tempting me to continual complaints. But old age should not complain; for wisdom flows from wounds, and pain teaches patience, that man may gather strength for his last journey. To-day I have taken up my pen for many reasons; and first and above all, for the sake of Marit, who has become a God-fearing maiden, but is light of foot as a deer, and variable in purpose. For she would like to abide by one thing, and is prevented by her nature; but that I have often seen before, and when hearts are made of such weak stuff, our Lord is indulgent and long-suffering, and allows them not to be tempted beyond their strength, lest they be shattered to pieces. For she is very fragile. I gave her the letter as you desired, and she hid it from all save her own heart. And if God will lend his sanction to this matter, then I have nothing to object; for she is a pleasure in the eyes of young men, as can easily be seen; and she has full measure of earthly goods, and somewhat of the heavenly too, spite of her inconstancy. For the fear of God in her mind is like water in a shallow pond; it is there when it rains, but gone again when the sun shines.

My eyes cannot endure more at present; for they see well at a distance, but pain me and fill with tears, if I look at objects more in detail. In conclusion, Oeyvind, I will tell you to take God with you in all you desire and undertake. For, as it is written, "Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. iv. 6).

Your old Schoolmaster,

BAARD ANDERSEN OPDAL

TO THE MOST HONORED MISS MARIT KNUDSDATTER HEIDE
FARMS.

Thanks for your letter, which I have read and burned, as you desired. You write about many things, but nothing at all of what I wished you to write. Nor do I dare to write any thing certain, before I know more about how you are in all respects. The schoolmaster's letter says nothing which one can trust to; but he praises you, and then he says you are fickle. That you also were before. Now I do not know what to believe, and therefore you must write; for I am in suspense, until you have written. At this time I remember best that you came on the cliff the last evening, and what you then said. I will not say more this time, and so farewell.

Most respectfully,

OEYVIND PLADSEN.

TO MR. OEYVIND THORESEN PLADSEN.

The schoolmaster has given me a new letter from you, which I have now read. But I do not understand it at all, and that probably comes from my not being learned. You wish to know how I am in all respects: I am healthy and well, and nothing the matter with me. I eat heartily, especially when I get porridge. I sleep well at night, and sometimes in the day-time too. I have danced much this winter; for there have been many parties here, and they have been very merry. I go to church, when there is not too much snow; but it has been deep this winter. Now I think you know every thing; and if you do not, I do not know what better you can do than to write once more.

MARIT KNUDSDATTER.

TO THE MOST HONORED MISS MARIT KNUDSDATTER HEIDE
FARMS.

I have received your letter, but you seem inclined to leave me just as wise as I was before. Perhaps, after all, this is an answer: I know not. I dare not write any thing of what I wish to, for I do not know you. But perhaps you do not know me better.

You must no longer think me the soft cheese you squeezed the water out of, when I sat and saw you dance. Since that time I have laid on many shelves to dry. Nor am I like those long-haired dogs who hang down their ears and run away from people, as I used to do: now I can stand fire.

Your letter was sportive enough, but it jested when it should not have jested at all; for you understood me very well, and you knew that I did not ask in joke, but because of late I cannot think of any thing else but what I asked about. I was waiting in great anxiety, and there came only nonsense and laughter.

Farewell, Marit Heidefarms. I shall not look at you too much, as I did at that dance. May you both eat well and sleep well, and finish your new web; and, above all, be able to shovel away the snow which lies in front of the church-door.

Most respectfully,

OEYVIND THORESEN PLADSEN

TO OEYVIND THORESEN, PUPIL AT THE AGRICULTURAL
SCHOOL.

Spite of my advanced years, and the weakness of my eyes, as well as the pain in my right hip, I must yield to the importunity of youth, which calls on us old folks when it has been caught in some snare. It entices us

and weeps, until it is set free ; but then immediately runs away from us again, and will listen to nothing more.

Now it is Marit, who is cajoling me, with many sweet words, to write at the same time as she does ; for she comforts herself, that she does not write alone. I have read your letter : she thought she had to do with John Hatlen, or another fool, and not one Schoolmaster Baard had trained ; but now she is in a dilemma. However, you have been too severe ; for there are certain women, who sport to keep from weeping, and it is the same as if they wept. But I like to have you take serious things seriously ; for otherwise you could not laugh at what is sport.

Concerning your inclinations, that you are bent on each other is now apparent from many things. I have often doubted about her, for she is like the course of the wind : but now, I know that she has resisted John Hatlen, at which her grandfather's wrath has been greatly kindled. She was pleased, when your offer came ; and when she joked, it was not from any harm, but from joy. She has endured much ; and this she has done, to wait for him on whom she had fixed her mind. But now you will not take her, but cast her off like a naughty child.

This it was I wished to tell you. And this counsel I must add, that you should come to an agreement with her ; for you can find enough difficulties to contend with without that. I am an old man, who has seen three generations : I know folly, and its course.

Your father and mother send love, and are waiting for you to come. But I would not write about this before, for fear you should be homesick. You do not know your father ; for he is like the tree, which gives no groan until it is hewn down. But should you ever come in need,

then you will learn to know him ; and you will be astonished at the treasures you will find. He has been hampered and silent in worldly matters ; but your mother has relieved his mind from earthly anxiety, and now light breaks in on the gloom.

Now my eyes grow dim, and my hand will write no more. Therefore I commend you to the care of Him whose eye is ever on the watch, and whose hand is never weary.

BAARD ANDERSEN OPDAL.

TO OEYVIND PLADSEN.

You seem to be angry with me, and I am very sorry. For I did not mean it so : I meant it well. I remember that often I have not been towards you as I ought, and therefore I will write to you now, but you must not show it to any one. Once I had every thing as I liked, and then I was not kind ; but now no one cares for me any longer, and I am very unhappy. John Hatlen has written some spiteful verses about me, that all the boys sing, and I dare not go to any dance. Both the old folks know about it, and I hear hard words. I am sitting alone writing, and you must not show my letter.

You have learned a great deal, and could advise me ; but now you are far away. I have often been down at your parents, and I have talked much with your mother, and we have become good friends ; but I dare not say any thing, for you wrote so strangely. The schoolmaster only laughs at me, and he knows nothing about the spiteful verses ; for no one in the parish dares to sing such things to him. Now I am alone, and have no one to speak to, I think of the time when we were children, and you were so kind to me, and I always sat on your sled. But now I wish I were a child again.

I dare not ask you to answer me again, for I have no right to. But if you would only answer me once more, I would never forget it in you, Oeyvind.

MARIT KNUDSATTER.

Dear me, burn this letter: I hardly know whether I dare send it.

DEAR MARIT,—Thank you for your letter: you wrote it in a happy moment. Now I will tell you, Marit, that I love you so much, that I can hardly stay here any longer; and as true as you love me again, John Hatlen's spiteful verses, and others' hard words, shall be like leaves which grow too thick on the tree. Since I got your letter, I am like a new person; for I am twice as strong as before, and I am not afraid of any one in the whole world. When I had sent the last letter, I repented it so, that I nearly fell ill. And now you shall hear what that led to. The superintendent took me aside, and asked what was the matter with me: he thought I was studying too hard. Then he told me, that when my year was out, I might be here one more, and quite free: I could help him with one thing and another, but he would teach me more. Then I thought that work was the only thing for me, and I thanked him very much; and I do not yet repent it, although I long for you: for the longer I am here, the better right I shall have one day to claim you. How happy I am now! I work like three, and I will never be behind-hand in any thing. But you shall have a book which I am reading, for there is much in it about love. I read in it in the evening, when the others are asleep, and then I read your letter over again. Have you thought of when we shall meet? I think so often of that, and you, too, shall see how delightful it will be. But I am glad that I

have toiled and written so much, although it was so hard before; for now I can say all I wish to you, and smile over it in my heart.

I shall give you many books to read, so that you can see how many trials they have had who loved each other truly, and that they have even preferred to die of sorrow, rather than forsake each other. And so we, too, shall do, and do it with great joy. It will indeed be nearly two years before we see each other, and still longer before we get each other: but every day which passes, makes it one day less; that is what we shall think while we are working.

My next letter shall be about so many things; but I have no more paper this evening, and the others are asleep. So I will go to bed and think of you, and that I will do until I fall asleep. Your friend,

OEYVIND PLADSEN





CHAPTER IX.

ONE Saturday, in midsummer, Thore Pladsen rowed across the bay, to fetch his son, who was expected home that afternoon from the Agricultural School, where he had finished his course. His mother had hired a woman to help in cleaning during several days beforehand. Every thing was fresh and shining. The little bedroom had been put in order a long time ago : a stove had been set in ; and there Oeyvind was to be. To-day his mother carried in fresh leaves, laid out clean linen, made the bed, and every now and then looked out to see if any boat were coming across the bay. Inside, there were great preparations going on, and always something lacking, or flies to chase away ; and in the little bedroom it was dusty, always dusty. No boat came as yet. She leaned on the window-seat, and looked across the water : suddenly she heard a step close by, in the road, and turned her head. It was the schoolmaster, who was coming slowly down the hill, leaning on a stick ; for his hip was weak. His shrewd eyes looked calmly about him. He stopped to rest, and nodded to her : —

“Not yet come?”

“No : I am expecting them every moment”

“Good weather for haymaking to-day”

“But warm for old folks to walk ”

The schoolmaster looked at her, smiling : —

“Have young folks been out to-day?”

“Yes; but have gone again.”

“Yes, yes; of course. I suppose they are to meet somewhere this evening?”

“Yes: I suppose so. Thore says they shall not meet in his house, before they have the old man’s consent.”

“Right, quite right.”

In a few minutes, the mother called, —

“There! I almost think they are coming.”

The schoolmaster looked off in the distance : —

“Yes: it is they.”

She went away from the window, and he entered the house. After he had rested a little, and drunk something, they proceeded down to the water, where the boat darted towards them with rapid strokes; for both father and son were rowing. The rowers had taken off their jackets: the water whitened under their oars, so that the boat soon came up to them. Oeyvind turned his head, and looked up; saw them both standing at the landing-place, and, resting his oars, shouted, —

“Good-day, mother! good-day, schoolmaster!”

“What a deep voice he has!” said his mother, her face sparkling: “dear, dear, he is just as light as ever,” she added.

The schoolmaster seized the boat as it came to land. The father laid down his oars, Oeyvind sprung by him and out of the boat, shook hands first with his mother, then with the schoolmaster. He laughed again and again; and, quite contrary to the custom of the peasants, he immediately began to pour out, in a rapid stream, all about the examination, the journey, the superintendent’s certificate, and the good offers he had had. He inquired

about the prospects for the harvest, and his acquaintances, all except one: his father was going to bring the things up from the boat, but, wishing also to hear, thought that they might lie there awhile, and followed up after. And so they walked up, Oeyvind laughing and talking; his mother laughing too, for she did not know at all what to say. The schoolmaster went slowly along by his side, looking at him attentively: his father walked respectfully a little farther off. And so they came home. He was pleased at all he saw: first that the house was painted, then that the mill had been enlarged, then that the bad windows were taken out in the sitting-room and bedroom, white glass set in instead of green, and the window-seat larger. As he came in, every thing was so wonderfully small, not at all as he remembered it, but so cheerful. The clock cackled like a fat hen, the carved chairs seemed as if they would speak: he knew every dish on the table which was laid ready, the chimney with its new coat of whitewash smiled welcome; the branches standing along the sides of the wall scattered their fragrance, the juniper strewed on the floor told of the festival. They sat down to the meal; but there was not much eaten, for he chattered away without ceasing. Now they all examined him more at their leisure, discovered differences and likeness, looked at what was altogether new about him, down to the blue cloth suit he wore.

Once when he had been telling a long story about one of his comrades, and at length concluded, so that there was a little pause, his father said, —

“I understand hardly a word of what you say, boy: you talk so tremendously fast.”

They all burst out laughing together, and Oeyvind not least: he knew very well it was true, but it was not pos-

sible for him to speak slower. Every thing new he had seen and learned during his long absence had so excited his imagination and understanding, and so driven him out of old habits, that faculties which had long been dormant seemed almost frightened into action, and his brain was constantly at work. They remarked, furthermore, that he had a habit here and there of taking up two or three words, and repeating them over and over again in his hurry: it seemed as if he were stumbling over them. Sometimes it was ridiculous; but then he laughed, and it was forgotten. The schoolmaster and his father sat and watched to see whether he had lost any of his thoughtfulness; but it did not appear so. He remembered every thing, and was even the one to remind them to lock the boat: he unpacked his clothes immediately, and hung them up, showed his books, his watch, every thing new, and all was well taken care of his mother said. He was exceedingly pleased with his little room: he wished to be at home in the beginning, he said, to help with the hay-making, and to study. Where he should go afterwards, he did not know, but it was quite the same to him. He had acquired a quickness and power of thought, which was quite refreshing, and a liveliness in the expression of his feelings, which does so much good to one who is striving the whole year through to repress his own. The schoolmaster grew ten years younger.

"Now we have got so far with him," said he, radiant, and rose to go.

When the mother had re-entered, after accompanying him to the doorstep outside as usual, she signed to Oeyvind to come in to the little bedroom.

"There will be some one waiting for you at nine o'clock," whispered she.

"Where?"

“Up on the cliff.”

Oeyvind looked at the clock, and it was near nine. He could not wait inside, but went out, climbed up until he had reached the top of the cliff, and looked around. The roof of the house lay directly under: the bushes on the roof had become large, all the young trees round where he stood had also grown; and he knew every one of them. He looked down the road which ran along the cliff and was bordered by the forest on the other side. The road looked gray and serious, but the forest was enlivened by a great variety of foliage: the trees had attained their full height. In the little bay lay a boat with loose sails: it was laden with planks, and waiting for a wind. He looked across the water which had borne him away, and brought him home again: it lay calm and smooth; some sea-birds flew over it, but without screaming, for it was late. His father came walking up from the mill, stopped on the doorstep, looked out as his son had done, then went down towards the water to take the boat in for the night. His mother came out from the side of the house, for she had been in the kitchen; she looked up towards the cliff, as she crossed the threshold to carry something to the hens, looked up again, and hummed. He sat down to wait: the young trees grew so thick, that he could not see far in; but he listened to the slightest sound. For a long time it was only birds that flew up and deceived him, soon after a squirrel which leaped in a tree near by. But at length there is a rustling further off: it ceases a moment, then begins again. He rises, his heart beats, and the blood rushes to his head, then something breaks through the bushes close by him; but it is a large, shaggy dog, which comes, and, seeing him, stands there on three legs without moving. It was the dog from the Upper Heide farms, and close behind him

it rustles again: the dog turns his head; now Marit comes.

A bush caught her dress: she turned to detach it, and so she was standing as he saw her first. She had her hair twisted up, and no covering on her head, as girls generally go in every-day attire: she wore a coarse plaid waist with short sleeves, and nothing else round her neck besides a plain linen collar. She had stolen away directly from the work in the fields, and had not dared to make any change in her dress. Now she looked up stealthily, and smiled: her white teeth shone, and her eyes sparkled from under the half-closed lids. She stood so a moment, peeping; but then came forwards, growing rosier and rosier at every step. He went to meet her, and took her hand between his two. She looked down on the ground, and so they stood.

"Thanks for all your letters," was the first she said; and when she looked up just a little, and laughed, he felt that she was the most mischievous little witch he could meet in the wood; but he was fairly caught, and she not less so.

"How tall you have grown!" said she, but meant something quite different. She looked at him more and more, laughed more and more: he laughed too, but they said nothing. The dog had seated himself on the slope, and was looking down towards the farm. Thore remarked the dog's head from the water below, and could not for his life understand what it was which peeped forth from the cliff above.

But the two had now dropped each other's hands, and begun talking a little. And when he had once begun, he soon became so loquacious that she could not help laughing at him.

"Yes: you see, so I am when I am happy, you see; and

when we two had made up, it seemed as if a lock in me burst open, — wide open, you see.”

She laughed. Afterwards she said, —

“All the letters you sent me I know almost by heart.”

“And I yours also! But you always wrote such short ones.”

“Because you always wanted to have them so long.”

“And when I wanted to write more about something, then you turned it off.”

“I show to the most advantage when you see my heel,” said the witch.

“But that is true: you have never told me how you got rid of John Hatlen?”

“I laughed.”

“How?”

“Laughed; do you not know what laughing is?”

“Yes: I can laugh.”

“Let us see.”

“Have you ever heard of such a thing? I must at least have something to laugh at.”

“That I do not need, when I am happy.”

“Are you happy now, Marit?”

“Why, am I laughing now?”

“Yes: that you are.”

He took both her hands in his, and clapped them together, while he looked at her. At this, the dog began to growl; then his hair stood up, and he began barking straight downwards, growing crosser and crosser, until at last he became quite furious. Marit sprang back, terrified; but Oeyvind came forwards, and looked down. It was his father it was barking at. He was standing directly under the cliff, with both hands in his pockets, and looking up at the dog: —

"Are you there, you too? What crazy dog is that you have got up there?"

"It is a dog from the Heide farms," answered Oeyvind, somewhat embarrassed.

"How the deuce did it come up there?"

But his mother had looked out from the kitchen, for she had heard the dreadful noise, and understood what it was all about; and she laughed, and said, —

"That dog is running about there every day, so there is nothing strange in it."

"He is a ferocious one, at all events."

"He will be better, if I stroke him," thought Oeyvind; and he did so.

The dog ceased barking, but growled. His father went confidently down, and the two were saved from discovery.

"That was this time," said Marit, as they again approached each other.

"Do you think it will be worse in future?"

"I know one who will keep a watch on us, — that I do."

"Your grandfather?"

"Exactly."

"But he shall not do any thing to us."

"Not a bit."

"And that you promise?"

"Yes: that I promise, Oeyvind."

"How beautiful you are, Marit!"

"So the fox said to the raven, and got the cheese."

"I shall get the cheese too: be sure of that."

"But you will not get it."

"Then I shall take it."

She turned her head away, and he did not take it.

"I must tell you one thing, Oeyvind:" she looked up, sideways.

"Well?"

"How ugly you have grown!"

"You will give the cheese, for all that."

"No: that I will not;" she turned away again.

"Now I must go, Oeyvind."

"I shall go with you."

"But not beyond the wood: there grandfather can see you."

"No: not beyond the wood. Dear me! are you going to run?"

"We cannot go side by side here."

"But that is not going together?"

"Catch me, then!"

She ran, he after; and she was soon caught fast, so that he came up with her.

"Have I now caught you for ever, Marit?" He had his hand round her waist.

"I think so," said she, in a low voice, and laughed; but was both flushed and serious.

No: now it must be, thought he; and he bent over to kiss her: but she bent her head down under his arm, laughed, and ran off. However, she stopped at the last trees.

"When shall we meet again?" whispered she.

"To-morrow, to-morrow," whispered he back.

"Yes: to-morrow."

"Farewell:" she ran on.

"Marit!" and she stopped. "How strange it was that we met first up on the cliff!"

"Yes: so it was." She ran on again.

He gazed long after her. The dog ran on in front,

barking; she after, quieting him. He turned, took off his cap, and threw it up in the air, caught it, and threw it up again.

"Now I really think I begin to be happy," said the boy, and went singing homewards.





CHAPTER X.

ONE afternoon late in the summer, as his mother and a girl were engaged in raking together the hay, while Oeyvind and his father carried it in, a little barefooted, bareheaded boy came skipping down over the hills and across the meadow to Oeyvind, to whom he gave a little note.

“You run well!” said Oeyvind.

“I am paid for it,” answered the boy.

On being asked whether he should have an answer, he said no, and took the way home again over the cliff; for there was some one coming after him up in the road, he said. Oeyvind broke open the note with some difficulty, for it was first folded together in a narrow strip, then tied in a knot, and then sealed; and in the note there stood,—

“Now he is on the marsh, but he moves slowly. Run up in the wood, and hide yourself.

“YOU KNOW WHOM.”

“No, that I won’t,” thought Oeyvind, and looked defiantly up over the hills. Nor was it long, before an old man appeared on the top of the hills, rested, walked on a little, rested again; both Thore and his wife stopped to look. But Thore soon smiled; his wife, on the contrary, changed color.

"Do you know him?"

"Yes: in this case it is not so easy to make a mistake."

Father and son began again to carry hay, but the latter managed so that they always went together. The old man up on the hill continued approaching nearer, like a heavy western storm. He was very tall and rather stout: he had lame feet, and went step by step with laborious gait, leaning on a staff. He soon came so near that they could see him distinctly: he stopped, took the cap off his head, and wiped away the perspiration with a handkerchief. He was quite bald far back: he had a round, wrinkled face, small, sparkling, blinking eyes, bushy eyebrows, and all his teeth in his mouth. When he spoke, it was in a sharp, grating voice, which seemed to be hopping over sand and stones; but here and there dwelt with great satisfaction on an "R," trilled out several yards long, and then suddenly made a hop several notes higher. In his young days he had been known as a lively but hasty-tempered man: in his old age, through many disappointments, he had become irritable and suspicious.

Thore and his son made many journeys in and out before Ole could reach them: they both understood that it was for no good he came, therefore it was all the funnier that he never got there. They were both obliged to keep very serious, and speak in an undertone; but as this never came to an end, it grew laughable. Only half a word, spoken to the point, can kindle laughter under such circumstances, and all the more, when there is danger associated with it. When finally he was only a few rods off, which, however, seemed never to grow less, Oeyvind said in a low voice, quite dryly, "He must carry a heavy load, that man;" and more was not necessary.

"It seems to me you are not very wise," whispered his father, although he was laughing himself.

"Hem, hem!" coughed Ole up on the hill.

"He is preparing his throat," whispered Thore.

Oeyvind fell on his knees in front of the hay-stack, thrust his head into the hay, and laughed. His father also bent down.

"Let us go into the barn," whispered he, took an armful of hay, and trotted off. Oeyvind took a little tuft, sprang after bent double with laughter, but did not drop down until he was inside the barn. His father was a serious man; but when something had once set him off laughing, first there was a low chuckling, then followed a succession of peals which grew longer and longer, until they terminated in one loud roar; then there came billow after billow, with a constantly longer gasp between. Now he was started: his son lay on the floor, the father stood above him, and both laughed till the roof cracked. Once in a while they had such laughing fits.

"But this comes unseasonably," said his father.

At last they did not know how it would end; for by this time the old man must have arrived at the farm.

"I won't go out," said the father: "I have nothing to do with him."

"Well, then I don't go either," answered Oeyvind.

"Hem, hem!" sounded just outside the barn-wall.

The father threatened the boy.

"Will you go out with yourself?"

"Yes: go along first."

"No: will you get along with yourself?"

"Yes: go first."

And they brushed each other down, and went out very seriously. As they came down to the gate, they saw Ole standing with his face towards the kitchen door, as if he

were considering: he held his cap in the same hand as his staff, and with his handkerchief he wiped the perspiration from his bald head, but at the same time pulled out the bushy tufts behind his ears and in his neck, so that they stuck out like nails. Oeyvind kept behind his father, which obliged the latter to stand still; and, to bring this to an end, he said with great gravity, —

“Are such old folks out walking?”

Ole turned round, looked severely at him, and adjusted his cap before he answered, —

“Yes: it seems so.”

“Perhaps you are tired: will you not go in?”

“Oh! I can rest here, where I am; my errand is not a long one.”

Some one opened the kitchen door a little: between it and Thore stood old Ole, with his cap-visor down over his eyes; for the cap was too large now, since he had lost his hair. To be able to see, he threw his head far back: the staff he held in his right hand, and the left he held firmly against his side, when he was not gesticulating; but this he never did, more than by stretching his hand half-way out, and holding it there still, like a guard for his dignity.

“Is that your son, standing behind you?” he began, in a very brisk voice.

“They say so.”

“His name is Oeyvind, isn’t it?”

“Yes: they call him Oeyvind.”

“He has been at one of these agricultural schools there down south?”

“There was something like it: yes.”

“My girl, — she, — my grand-daughter, — yes, Marit, — she has got crazy of late.”

“That is bad.”

“She will not marry.”

“Won’t she?”

“She will have none of all the farmers’ sons who present themselves.”

“Indeed!”

“But they say that he is at the bottom of it, — he who is standing there.”

“Do they?”

“They say he has turned her head, — yes: he, there; your son, Oeyvind.”

“The deuce you say!”

“You see, I don’t like to have any one take my horses when I let them out on the mountains; nor do I like to have my daughters taken, when I let them out to dance: don’t like it at all.”

“No: of course not.”

“I cannot go with them: I am old; I cannot look after it.”

“No, no! no, no!”

“Yes: you see, I will keep order; there the block shall stand, and there the axe shall lie, and there the knife; and there they shall sweep, and there they shall throw out, not outside the door, but there in the corner, exactly there, — yes: and in no other place. So, when I say to her, not this one, but that one, then it shall be that one, and not this one!”

“Of course.”

“But it is not so: for three years she has said no; and for three years we have not been on good terms. This is bad; and if it is he who is the cause of it, then I will tell him, so that you hear it, you, who are his father that it is of no use for him; he must give it up.”

“Yes — yes.”

Ole looked a moment at Thore, then he said, —

"You answer so short."

"No longer than a sausage."

At this, Oeyvind had to laugh, although he was in no mood for it. But, with courageous persons, fear always borders on laughter, and now it passed over to the latter.

"What are you laughing at?" inquired Ole, shortly and sharply.

"I?"

"Are you laughing at me?"

"May God preserve me from it!" but his own answer made him laugh.

This Ole saw, and grew perfectly furious.

Both Thore and Oeyvind would make amends by serious faces, and entreaties to go in; but it was three years' wrath which sought vent, and therefore it was not to be smothered.

"You need not think to make a fool of me," he began: "I am on a lawful errand: I am looking out for my grand-daughter's happiness, as I understand it; and the laughter of small whelps does not stand in my way. One does not bring up girls to throw them into the first workman's house which opens the door; and one does not carry on a place forty years, to hand over the whole to the first one who makes a fool of the girl. My daughter went about making a fool of herself, until she was allowed to marry a good-for-nothing; and he drank them both into the grave, and I had to take the child, and pay the fiddler; but, by my soul! if my grand-daughter goes and does the same thing, you will know it! I tell you, that, as sure as I am Ole Nordistuen, of the Heide farms, the minister shall publish the banns for the witches up in Nordal forest, before he shall give out such names from the pulpit as Marit's and yours, you jackanapes! Are you going to frighten away respectable suitors from

the house, I should like to know? Yes: just try to come, and you will get such a journey down over the hills, that your shoes will follow after like smoke. You giggler! You think, perhaps, I don't know what you are thinking of, both you and she. Yes: I do; you think that Ole Nordistuen will turn his nose upwards, over in the churchyard, and then you will trip forwards to the altar. No: now I have lived sixty-six years, and I will prove to you, boy, that I will live, so that you will go into a consumption over it, both of you! You may take this, too, that you may stick to the house like new-fallen snow, and yet not see even the soles of her feet: for I am going to send her out of the parish; I am going to send her where she will be safe, so you can flutter round here like a jay bird, and marry rain and north wind. And now I have nothing more to say to you: but you, who are his father, know my opinion now; and if you desire the good of this fellow, then you must get him to turn the river where it can run, — across my property it is forbidden.

He turned away with short, quick steps, lifting his right foot a little higher than the left, and scolding away to himself.

Perfect seriousness had fallen on those remaining: an evil omen had mingled with their jesting and laughter, and the house stood a moment empty, as after a fright. The mother, who had heard every thing, from the kitchen, looked anxiously at Oeyvind, who was almost in tears, and she would not make it harder for him by saying a single word. When they had all gone in silently, the father sat down by the window, and looked out after Ole, with much seriousness on his countenance. Oeyvind's eyes hung on the least change of mien, for on his first words there depended almost the future of the two young people. If Thore added his refusal to Ole's, it

would hardly be possible to offer any opposition. His thoughts ran on, terrified, from obstacle to obstacle. At one moment, he saw only poverty, misunderstanding, and a sense of wounded honor; and every support he would seek, glided away in his mind. It increased his anxiety, that his mother stood with her hand on the latch of the kitchen door, uncertain whether she had strength enough to remain inside, and await the issue, and that she at last quite lost courage, and stole out. Oeyvind looked steadily at the father, who seemed as if he would never take his eyes in from the window: nor did the son dare to speak, for the other must have time to bring his thoughts to a conclusion. But, at this moment, his own soul had solved the anxious problem, and manned itself anew: "None but God can, however, separate us," thought he to himself, and looked at the father's wrinkled brow. Now there will soon come something. Thore drew a long sigh, rose, looked in, and met the son's glance. He stopped, and looked long upon him.

"It was my will that you should give her up, for one should be reluctant to gain any thing by begging or threats. If you will not give over, then you may let me know, when some opportunity offers, and perhaps I can be of assistance to you." He went to his work, and the son followed.

But that evening, Oeyvind had his plan ready: he would endeavor to become teacher in farming for the district, and ask the inspector and the schoolmaster to help him. "If she only holds out, then, with God's help, I shall win her by my work."

He waited in vain for Marit that evening; but as he walked there, he sung the song he liked best.



CHAPTER XI.

IT was in the midst of the noonday repose: at the great Heide farms the work-people were asleep. The hay they had left, lay scattered over the meadows, and the rakes were stuck up in the ground. Below the barn-door bridge stood the hay-carts: the harness, which had been taken off, lay near by; and the horses were tethered, and grazing at a little distance. With the exception of these, and some hens which had strayed off into the fields, there was not a living creature to be seen on the whole plain.

In the mountain above the farms, there was a cleft, and there the road led in to the Heide farm pastures, large, fertile mountain-plains. Up in the ravine, a man was standing looking down over the plain, just as if he were expecting some one. Behind him lay a little mountain-lake, from which the brook ran down which made the cleft in the mountain; around this lake on both sides cattle-paths ran across to the mountain stables which he could see far away. The calling in of the cattle reached his ears, the bells tinkled among the islands, for the cows straggled apart to seek water; the dogs and cow-herds tried to drive them together, but in vain. The cows came dashing along with the most curious antics, made strange plunges, and ran with a short, wild bellow,

and with their tails in the air, straight down to the water in which they remained standing; their bells chimed across the lake every time they moved their heads. The dogs drank a little, but remained behind on land: the cow-herds followed after, and sat down on the warm, slippery hill. Here they took out the luncheon from their boxes, exchanged with each other, boasted about their dogs, oxen, and the family they lived with, then undressed themselves, and sprang into the water by the side of the cows. The dogs would not go in, but idled lazily around, with hanging heads, hot eyes, and lolling tongues. On the slopes around no bird was to be seen, no sound heard, except the children's chatter and the chiming of the bells; the heather stood burnt and arid; the sun heated the sides of the hill so that every thing blistered beneath its rays.

But it was Oeyvind who sat up there in the mid-day sun, waiting. He sat in his shirt-sleeves, close by the brook which ran out of the lake. No one appeared as yet on the Heide farm plain; and he began to grow a little anxious, when suddenly a large dog bounded heavily out of a door in Nordistuen, and after him a girl in white sleeves. She tripped across the meadows towards the hill: he felt a strong desire to shout down to her, but dared not. He looked attentively at the farm-house, to see if any one chanced to come out and notice her; but she was shielded from observation, and several times he rose from impatience.

At last she came toiling along by the side of the brook, the dog a little in advance, and snuffing the air, she holding on to the small bushes, and walking with more and more exhausted gait. Oeyvind leaped downwards: the dog growled and was hushed; but as soon as Marit saw him coming, she sat down on a large stone, red as blood,

tired and overcome by the heat. He threw himself down on the stone by her side.

"Thank you for coming."

"What a heat, and what a long way! Have you been waiting long?"

"No: since they watch us in the evening, we have to employ the morning. But hereafter I think we will not proceed so secretly, and give ourselves so much trouble: it was just about that I wished to speak to you."

"Not secretly?"

"I know very well that every thing which is carried on secretly, pleases you most; but it pleases you also to show courage. To-day I have much to say to you, and now you must listen."

"Is it true that you are trying to be agricultural teacher for the district?"

"Yes; and I think I shall succeed. In this I have a twofold intention: first, to win myself a position; but, secondly, and more especially, to accomplish something which your grandfather can see and appreciate. It happens fortunately that the majority of the tenants on the Heide farms are young people who wish for improvements and demand help: money they have too. So I shall begin there: I shall alter every thing, from their stables to their waterpipes; I shall give lectures and work; I shall in short, so to speak, besiege the old man with good works."

"That is bravely said: what more, Oeyvind?"

"Yes: the rest will concern us two. You must not leave home."

"But if he orders it?"

"And keep nothing secret which concerns us two."

"But if he torments me?"

"But we stand higher, and defend ourselves better, by

allowing every thing to be known. We should be as much as possible before persons' eyes, just that they may be obliged to talk of how much we love each other; so much the sooner will they wish that all may go well with us. You must not go away. There is danger for those who are separated, that idle talk may break in between them. We do not believe any thing the first year, but we begin to believe a little the second. We two will meet once a week, and laugh away all the harm they try to set between us: we will perhaps meet at a party, and dance together until the floor shakes, while those who slander us are sitting around. We will meet at church, and nod to each other. If any one writes a song about us, then we will sit down together, and try to concoct one in answer: it must go well, when we help each other. None can reach us, when we keep together, and when we also show people that we keep together. All unhappy love belongs either to timid or weak or sick people, or calculating people, who go waiting for a certain opportunity, or cunning people, who finally smart for their own cunning, or vain people, who do not care enough for each other to forget position and difference,—they go and hide themselves, send letters, tremble at a word, and fear; that constant uneasiness and irritation in the blood, they at last take for love, feel that they are unhappy, and dissolve like sugar. A fig for such: if they only really loved each other, they would not be afraid; then they would laugh; they would go openly straight up to the church-door before the smiles and remarks of all. I have read about it in books, and I have also seen it myself: *that* love is not worth much which seeks concealment. It must begin in secrecy, because it begins in bashfulness; but it must live in openness, because it lives in joy. It is as in the change of foliage; that which is to

grow cannot hide itself. At all events, you see that every thing dry on the trees falls off the moment the new leaves begin to shoot. He who feels love casts off all the old, dead trash he clung to before; the sap wells up and streams out; and should no one notice it then? Huzza, my girl! they shall be happy at seeing us happy; two betrothed who remain faithful to each other, and conferring a benefit on others, for we give them a poem which their children learn by heart to the shame of their unbelieving parents. I have read of many such; there also live some in the memory of people here in the parish, and those who now relate the story, and are moved by it, are the children of the very ones who once caused all the harm. Yes, Marit: now we two will give each other our hands, so; yes, and now we will promise each other to keep together, so; yes, and then it will be all right; Hurra!"

He was going to clasp her head, but she turned it away, and glided down off the stone.

He remained sitting: she came back, and, with her arms on his knee, stood talking and looking up to him.

"Listen to me, Oeyvind; but, if he now decides that I shall go away, what then?"

"Then you shall say no, straight out."

"Oh dear! how will that do?"

"But he cannot carry you out into the carriage."

"If he does not do just that, he can force me in many other ways."

"That I do not believe: you owe obedience, it is true, as long as it is not sin; but it is also your duty to let him know to the full extent how difficult it is for you to be obedient this time. I am sure he will think better of you when he sees it: now he thinks, like most other persons,

that it is only childish nonsense. Show him it is something more."

"You may believe, he is not easy to get along with. He watches me like a tied goat."

"But you wear away the string several times a day."

"That is not true."

"Yes: every time you secretly think of me, you wear it away."

"Yes, in that way. But are you then sure that I think of you so often?"

"Otherwise you would not be sitting here."

"Why, you sent a message for me to come."

"But you came because your thoughts impelled you."

"Rather because the weather was so fine."

"You just said it was too warm."

"To go up hill, yes; but down again?"

"Why did you come up then?"

"So as to run down again."

"Why have you not already gone?"

"Because I needed to rest."

"And talk with me about love."

"I could easily give you the pleasure of listening."

"While the birds were singing" —

"And the others sleeping" —

"And the bells ringing" —

"In the green grove."

Here they both saw Marit's grandfather come sauntering out into the yard, and go over to the bell-rope to ring the people up. The work-people came slowly from the barns and outbuildings, went sleepily to their horses and rakes, spread themselves over the meadow, and soon all was life and work again. Only grandfather went out of one house and in to another, at last up on the highest barn-bridge, and looked out. A little boy came running

up to him : probably he had called him. The boy, sure enough, started over in the direction Pladsen lay. The grandfather, in the mean while, moved here and there about the farm, while he often looked upwards, and had at least a suspicion that the black spot up on the "Great Stone" was Marit and Oeyvind. But for a second time Marit's great dog was the cause of trouble. He saw a strange horse drive into the Heide farms ; and, under the impression that he was in the midst of his farm duties, he began to bark with all his might. They hushed the dog, but he had become angry, and would not stop : the grandfather stood below, and still stared up. But it grew still worse, for all the cowherds' dogs heard with amazement the strange voice, and came running up. When they saw that it was a great, wolf-like giant, all the stiff-haired Finnish dogs united round this one. Marit became so frightened, that she ran away without any farewell. Oeyvind rushed into the midst of the fight, kicked and fought ; but the dogs only changed their field of battle, and then set to again with frightful howls ; he after again, and so it kept on, until they had waltzed over to the very edge of the brook ; there he again ran up to them : the consequence of which was, that they tumbled all together down into the water just at a place where it was quite deep, and there separated shamefaced. So ended this forest-battle. Oeyvind walked across through the wood till he reached the road ; but Marit met the grandfather up by the fence.

"Where do you come from?"

"From the wood."

"What were you doing there?"

"Picking berries."

"That is not true."

"No : it is not."

"What were you doing then?"

"I was talking to some one."

"Was it with that Pladsen boy?"

"Yes."

"Listen to me, Marit: to-morrow you leave."

"No."

"Listen to me, Marit: I shall only say one thing to you only one, — you *shall* leave."

"You cannot lift me into the carriage?"

"No? can I not?"

"No; for you will not."

"Will I not? Listen to me, Marit: only for fun, you see, — only for fun, — I tell you that I will smash the backbone of that good-for-nothing fellow of yours."

"No: that you dare not do."

"Dare I not? Do you say I dare not? Who would do any thing to me, — who?"

"The schoolmaster."

"Schoo — school — schoolmaster? Does he trouble himself about him, do you think?"

"Yes: it is he who has kept him at the Agricultural School."

"The schoolmaster?"

"Yes: the schoolmaster!"

"Listen to me, Marit: I will not hear any more of this raving; you shall leave the district. You only make me trouble and sorrow. I am an old man; I wish to see you well cared-for: I will not live in folks' talk as a fool, just on account of this. I only desire your own good: you ought to understand that, Marit. It will soon be over with me, and then you are left here: how would it have fared with your mother, if it had not been for me? Listen to me, Marit: be reasonable, hear what I have to say; I only wish for your own good."

"No: that you do not."

"Do I not? What do I wish then?"

"To have your own will, that is what you want; but you do not ask about mine."

"You have a will perhaps, you young sea-gull you. Perhaps you understand what is for your own good, you fool you! I will give you a little whipping, for all you are so big and tall. Listen to me, Marit: let me talk kindly with you. You are not so bad, after all; but you are not quite in your right mind. You must listen to me: I am a sensible old man. We will talk kindly together: I am not so well off as folks think; a poor, loose bird can soon fly away with the little I have; your father was hard on it. Let us take care of ourselves in this world: we cannot do any thing better. The schoolmaster can well afford to talk, for he has money himself; so has the minister too: let them preach. But we who must toil for our food, for us it is another thing. I am old, I know a great deal, I have seen many things: love, you see, can be well enough to talk about; yes, but it is not good for any thing. It is good enough for ministers, and that kind of people: peasants must go to work in another way. First food, you see, then God's Word, and then a little writing and arithmetic, and then a little love, if it falls in the way; but the devil if it is worth while to begin with love, and end with food! What have you to answer now, Marit?"

"I do not know."

"Don't you know what you shall answer?"

"Yes: I do know."

"Well, then?"

"May I say it?"

"Yes: to be sure you may say it."

"I think a great deal of the love."

He stood a moment in consternation, calling to mind a hundred similar conversations with similar results, shook his head, turned his back, and went.

He picked a quarrel with the workmen, scolded the girls, beat the big dog, and nearly scared the life out of a little hen which had strayed into the field ; but to Marit he said nothing.

That evening Marit was so happy when she went up to bed, that she opened the window, lay up in the window-seat, looked out, and sung. She had received a pretty little souvenir-book from Oeyvind ; and in it there was a pretty little love-song that she sung.





CHAPTER XII.

SEVERAL years have passed since the last events.

It is late in the autumn. The schoolmaster comes walking up to Nordistuen, opens the outer door, finds no one at home, opens another, finds no one there either; so keeps on until he reaches the innermost room in the long building. There Ole Nordistuen is sitting alone in front of the bed, and looking at his hands.

The schoolmaster bows, and he bows in return: he takes a stool, and seats himself in front of Ole.

"You have sent for me," he says.

"So I have."

The schoolmaster takes a fresh quid, looks round the room, takes up a book which is lying on the bench, and turns over the leaves.

"What was it you wanted of me?"

"I am just sitting thinking it over."

The schoolmaster gives himself good time, searches for his spectacles to read the title of the book, wipes them, and puts them on.

"You are growing old now, Ole."

"Yes: it was about that I wished to speak to you. I am failing: soon I shall lie in my grave."

"Then you ought to take care that you lie there well, Ole."

He closes the book, and sits looking at the cover.

"That is a good book that you have in your hand."

"It is not bad: have you often got beyond the cover Ole."

"Now of late."

The schoolmaster lays down the book and puts away his spectacles.

"I do not think things are going on now as you would like to have them, Ole."

"That they have not done as far back as I can remember."

"Yes: it was so with me a long time. I lived at enmity with a good friend, and wished that he would come to me, and as long as that lasted I was unhappy. At last I hit on the expedient of going to him, and since then it has been well with me."

Ole looks up and is silent.

"How do you think the farm is going on, Ole?"

"Down hill, like myself."

"Who shall have it when you are taken away?"

"That is what I do not know; that it is, too, which torments me."

"Your neighbors are getting on well now, Ole."

"Yes: they have that head-farmer to help them."

The schoolmaster turned carelessly towards the window.

"You ought to have help, — you, too, Ole. You cannot walk much, and you understand but little of the new ways."

"I do not suppose there is any one who will help me."

"Have you asked for it?"

Ole was silent.

"I also treated our Lord in the same way a long time. You are not kind to me I said to Him. — Have you

prayed me to be so? asked He. — No, that I had not; so I prayed, and since then all has gone well.”

Ole is silent, and now the schoolmaster is silent too.

At last Ole says, —

“I have a grandchild: she knows what would please me before I am taken away; but she does not do it.”

The schoolmaster smiles.

“Perhaps it would not please her?”

Ole is silent.

“There are many things which annoy you; but, as far as I can make out, they are all connected with the farm.”

Ole says in a low voice, —

“It has gone through many generations, and the soil is good. All that father after father has scraped together lies in it; but now nothing grows. Nor do I know who shall drive in after I have been driven out. He will not be one of the family.”

“She who is the grandchild will continue the family.”

“But he who takes her, how will he take the farm? That I must know before I go to my rest. There is no time to be lost, Baard, either with me or the farm.”

They are both silent; then the schoolmaster says, —

“Shall we go out a little, and take a look at the farm in the fine weather?”

“Yes: let us do so. I have work-people up on the slope: they are gathering leaves, but only work while I am looking on.”

He totters over after the big cap and stick, and says, in the mean time, —

“I don’t think they like to work for me: I don’t understand it.”

When they had fairly come out, and were going round the house, he stopped.

"Now, look here. No order; the wood thrown about, the axe not stuck in the block."

He bent over with difficulty, lifted it, and drove it in fast.

"Here you see a skin which has fallen down; but has any one hung it up again?"

He did it himself.

"And here the storehouse; do you suppose the steps are taken away?"

He carried them away himself. Then stopping, he looked at the schoolmaster, and said, —

"So it is every single day."

As they went upwards, they heard a merry song from the slopes.

"Now they are singing at their work," said the schoolmaster.

"That is little Knut Oestistuen, who is singing: he is gathering leaves for his father. Over there my people are working: they are not likely to be singing."

"That is not one of the parish songs?"

"No: I hear that."

"Oeyvind Pladsen has been much over there in Oestistuen: perhaps it is one of those he has brought to the parish; for there is much singing where he is."

To this there was no answer.

The field they walked over was not in good condition; it needed attention. The schoolmaster remarked on this, and then Ole stopped.

"I have not strength to do any thing more," he said almost pathetically.

"Hired work-people, without looking after, come too dear. But it is hard to walk over such a field, you may believe."

As their conversation now turned on to how large the

farm was and what parts most needed cultivation, they concluded to go up on the slope where they could overlook the whole. When they had at last reached a high point, and could take it all in, the old man was moved.

"I really should not like to leave it so. We have worked down there, both I and my parents; but there is nothing to show for it now."

A song burst out directly over their heads, but with the peculiar sharpness a boy's voice has when it is poured out in full blast. They were not far from the tree, in the top of which little Knut Oestistuen was sitting gathering leaves for his father, and they had to listen to the boy.

Ole had sat down, and concealed his face in his hands.

"Here I will speak with you," said the schoolmaster, sitting down by his side.

Down at Pladsen, Oeyvind had just returned from rather a long journey. The boy who had driven him was still before the door, as the horse was resting. Although Oeyvind's earnings, as head-farmer for the district, were now very fair, he still lived in his little room down at Pladsen, and assisted his parents in his spare time. Pladsen was cultivated from one end to the other; but it was so small, that Oeyvind called the whole "Mother's Plaything;" for it was she in particular who gave attention to the farming.

He had just changed his clothes: his father had come in from the mill white with meal, and had also dressed. They stood talking about taking a short walk before supper, when the mother came in quite pale.

"Here are queer visitors coming up to the house: oh dear! do look out!"

Both men rushed to the window, and Oeyvind it was who first exclaimed, —

“Why, it is the schoolmaster; and, — yes, I almost believe, — yes, it is certainly he!”

“Yes: it is old Ole Nordistuen,” said Thore, also turning away from the window so as not to be seen; for the two were already in front of the house.

Oeyvind caught a glance from the schoolmaster, just as he was going away from the window. Baard smiled and looked back at Ole, who with his stick was toiling on in small, short steps, lifting one leg constantly higher than the other. Outside, the schoolmaster was heard to say, “I believe he has lately returned home;” and Ole twice over rejoined, “Well, well.”

They remained a long time quiet out in the passage. The mother had crept up into the corner where the milk-shelf was: Oeyvind stood in his favorite position, leaning his back against the great table, with his face turned towards the door: the father sat there by his side. At last there was a knock; and then in walked the schoolmaster and pulled off his hat, afterwards Ole and pulled off his cap, after which he turned towards the door to shut it. He was long in turning round again; he was evidently embarrassed. Thore rose, asked them to take a seat inside: they seated themselves side by side on the bench in front of the window. Thore sat down again.

And now we shall see how the match was arranged.

The schoolmaster began, —

“We have fine weather this autumn, after all.”

“It has improved of late,” replied Thore.

“It generally holds a good while I think, when it gets over in that quarter.”

“Have you got in the crop up there?”

“We have not: Ole Nordistuen here, whom you perhaps know, would like your help, Oeyvind, if there is nothing else in the way?”

"When it is required, I shall do what I can," answered Oeyvind.

"But it was not exactly at the present moment he meant. The farm does not go on well he thinks, and he believes that what is lacking is the right system of cultivation and proper oversight."

"But I am so little at home," said Oeyvind.

The schoolmaster looks at Ole. He feels that he must now say something: he clears his throat a couple of times, and begins quickly and shortly, —

"It was, it is, — yes, — we meant that you should be in a manner established, — that you should be, — yes, — be as it were at home up there with us, — be there when you were not out."

"Many thanks for the offer, but I would like to live where I now am."

Ole looks at the schoolmaster, who says, —

"It seems to go wrong with Ole to-day. The fact is, that he has been here once before, and the recollection of that puts the words in a snarl for him."

"Yes, so it is: I ran the race of a madman," put in Ole, quickly. "I strove against the girl until the tree split. But let bygones be bygones: the rain-brook does not loosen large stones; snow does not lie long on the ground in May; it is not the thunder which kills people."

They all four laugh. The schoolmaster says, —

"Ole means that you must not remember that occasion any longer; nor you either, Thore."

Ole looks at them without knowing whether he dare begin again.

Then Thore says, —

"The wild briar takes hold with many teeth, but tears no wounds. In me, at all events, there are no thorns left."

"I did not know the boy at that time," says Ole. "Now I see that what he sows grows; the harvest fulfils the promise of the spring; there is money in his finger ends, and I should like to get hold of him."

Oeyvind looks at the father, he at the mother, she from them to the schoolmaster, and then all three at him.

"Ole thinks that he has a large farm."

"A large farm," interrupts Ole, "but ill-managed. I can do no more: I am old, and my legs cannot run errands for my head. But it is well worth while to go to work up there."

"The largest farm in the parish, and that by a great deal," puts in the schoolmaster.

"The largest farm in the parish," echoes Ole. "But that is just the misfortune: shoes that are too large fall off; it is well to have a good gun, but one must be able to lift it." Then turning quickly towards Oeyvind, "Perhaps you might lend a hand to it," he said.

"So I should be farm-overseer?"

"Exactly so: you should have the farm."

"Should I have the farm?"

"Exactly so: you should conduct it."

"But," —

"Will you not?"

"Yes, of course."

"Yes, yes; yes, yes: then it is all settled as the hen said, when she flew on to the water."

"But," —

Ole looks puzzled at the schoolmaster, who remarks, —

"Oeyvind is asking, I think, whether he shall have Marit too?"

"Marit into the bargain," quickly replies Ole.

"Marit into the bargain!"

Thereupon, Oeyvind burst out laughing, and jumped

straight up ; after him all three laughed. Oeyvind rubbed his hands together, and rushed backwards and forwards over the floor, repeating over and over : "Marit into the bargain ! Marit into the bargain !" Thore laughed with a deep chuckle, the mother stood up in the corner with her eyes fixed on her son until they filled with tears.

"What do you think about the farm," says Ole, in great excitement.

"Splendid land !"

"Splendid land ! isn't it ?"

"No pasture like it !"

"No pasture like it !"

"Will it do ?"

"It will be the best farm in the district !"

"The best farm in the district ! Do you think so ? Do you mean so ?"

"As true as I am standing here !"

"Yes : that is just what I say."

They both talked with the same rapidity, and fitted together like two wheels.

"But money, you see, money ? I have no money," said Ole.

"It goes on slowly without money ; but still it will go."

"It will go ! Of course it will go ! But if we had money, it would go quicker you think ?"

"Many times quicker."

"Many times ? We ought to have money ! Yes, yes : a man can chew without all his teeth ; he who drives with oxen comes along at last."

The mother stood winking at Thore, who kept looking at her from one side and then looking away again quickly, while he sat swaying his body to and fro and rubbing his hands down over his knees. The schoolmaster winked at him too. Thore opened his mouth,

coughed a little, and made an attempt; but Ole and Oeyvind talked so incessantly into each other's mouths, and laughed and made such a noise, that no one could make himself heard.

"You must be quiet a little while: Thore has something he wishes to say," interrupts the schoolmaster.

They stop and look at Thore, who finally begins in a low tone.

"For a long time on this place we had one mill: later it has been so that we have had two. These mills have always yielded a few skillings in the course of the year; but neither my father nor I have used any of the skillings except while Oeyvind was away. The schoolmaster has taken care of them, and he says they have paid well where they were; but now it is best that Oeyvind should take them for Nordistuen."

The mother stood off in the corner, making herself quite small; but she looked with sparkling joy at Thore, who sat very gravely, looking almost stupid. Ole Nordistuen sat opposite him with gaping mouth. Oeyvind was the first to recover from his astonishment, and burst out with, —

"Does it not seem as if good luck pursued me?"

Thereupon, he walked across the floor to the father, slapped him on the shoulders so that it resounded: "You father!" said he, rubbing his hands together and continuing his walk.

"How much money might there be?" asked Ole at last of the schoolmaster, in a low voice.

"It is not so little."

"Some hundreds?"

"A little more."

"A little more? Oeyvind, a little more! Good Lord, what a farm it will be!"

He rose and laughed loudly.

"I must go with you up to Marit's," says Oeyvind: "we can use the carriage which is standing outside so as to be quick."

"Yes: quick, quick! Will *you*, too, have every thing quick?"

"Yes: quick and mad."

"Quick and mad! Exactly as when I was young, exactly!"

"Here is your cap and stick: now I am going to drive you along!"

"You drive me along, ha, ha, ha! but you are coming too, ar'n't you, — you are coming too? Come along, you others, too; this evening we must sit together as long as the coals are alive; come too!"

They promised this: Oeyvind helped him into the carriage, and they drove up to Nordistuen. Up there the big dog was not the only one who was amazed when Ole Nordistuen drove into the farm with Oeyvind Pladsen. While Oeyvind was helping him out of the carriage, and servants and work-people were gaping at them, Marit came out into the passage to see what the dog was barking at so incessantly, but stopped as if spellbound, then turned burning red, and ran in. Old Ole in the mean time shouted so fearfully for her when he had gone into the house, that she was obliged to make her appearance again.

"Go and make yourself smart, girl: here is the one who is to have the farm."

"Is it true?" she says, without knowing it herself, and so loud that it echoed.

"Yes: it is true!" answers Oeyvind, clapping his hands.

Thereupon, she swings round on her toe, throws far

away what she has in her hand, and runs out; but Oeyvind after her.

Soon came the schoolmaster, Thore, and his wife: the old man had had candles put on the table, which was spread with a white cloth. Wine and beer were offered; and he himself went about constantly lifting his feet still higher than usual, but his right foot constantly higher than the left.

Before this little tale is finished, it may be told that five weeks afterwards Oeyvind and Marit were united in the parish church. The schoolmaster himself led the singing that day, for his assistant beadle was ill. His voice was broken now, for he was old; but Oeyvind thought it did one good to hear him. And when he had given his hand to Marit and led her up to the altar, the schoolmaster nodded to him from the choir, just as Oeyvind had seen him when he sat mournful at the dancing-party: he nodded back, while tears struggled to come up.

The tears at the dancing-party were the harbingers of these at the wedding; and between them lay his faith and his work.

Here ends the story of a happy boy.



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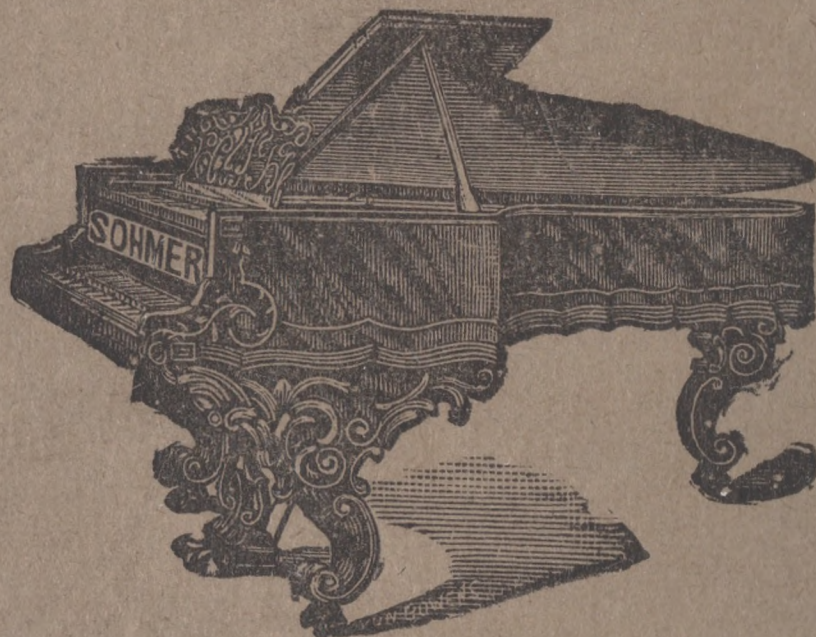
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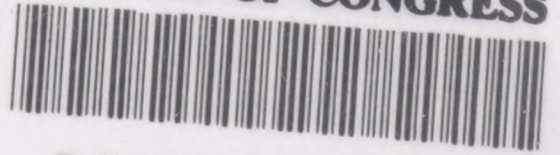
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